

Mr. President,

I should like to thank the Council for giving me the opportunity to participate in this debate. I should like also to extend good wishes to you on assuming the office of the President for the month of January. The Council is fortunate to have you guiding its affairs in these difficult times.

It is a matter of deep regret to Canada that we enter a new year, and a new decade under the sombre shadows of crisis, one of which has necessitated the convocation of this urgent meeting.

Let no one try to minimize the gravity of the situation that has resulted in this debate. More than fifty nations, by requesting that the Security Council be called into session, have manifested their profound concern over the violation we have been witnessing in Afghanistan of one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. The Soviet invasion of an independent nation is a gross violation of international law, and equally serious in this day and age, a clear reversal of the process of decolonization begun more than a quarter century ago. Respect for the principles and obligations of international law is a cornerstone of the United Nations and all members are committed to it. There cannot be one law for the Soviet Union, and one for the rest of the world. Canada has had no option therefore but to associate itself with all those -- and there are very many of them -- who have condemned the Soviet action in Afghanistan as a blatant use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of a smaller neighbouring state.

We are being asked to believe that Afghanistan was threatened by outside aggression, and that the military might of a great power -- the Soviet Union -- was necessary to rescue Afghanistan from its plight. Surely no one believes it -- and it disappoints my government to think either that the Soviet leaders have talked themselves into believing it, or are seriously asking others to believe such a contention. The view of the Canadian Government is that, before the Soviet invasion and indeed now, the situation in Afghanistan has been one of civil war rooted in the resistance of a substantial part of the Afghan population which has been increasingly alienated by the policies of a régime which had come to power by undemocratic means. All evidence suggests that the Soviet Union is deeply implicated in the coup d'état of December 1979, and indeed one of the reasons for the Soviet military intervention was to place in power a wholly subservient régime. As we have seen, it is easy enough to parachute an alien régime into a country, call it revolutionary and then call all anti-government activity anti-revolutionary. Given what has happened in Afghanistan, intervention would be an inadequate word to describe what the Soviet Union has done, it has quite literally moved in. In such circumstances, the Canadian Government has already announced that it will not accord recognition to the régime which has assumed power in Afghanistan with the aid of Soviet arms. But the consequences of this military action reach beyond the fate of the Afghan people to threaten the very fabric of the international community.