

FOREWORD

On October 24 of each year, the world commemorates United Nations Day. In his 1976 message to the Secretary-General, D. Kurt Waldheim, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Don Jamieson, expressed Canada's best wishes and pledged renewed support for the organization. His words, written just before Canada was elected to the Security Council for the fourth time (1948-49, 58-59, 67-68, 77-78), will serve as a fitting introduction to the following review of Canada's participation at the Thirty-first Session of the UN General Assembly. Mr. Jamieson wrote:

On behalf of the Government and people of Canada, I wish to convey to you, and all the staff members of the United Nations and its affiliated organizations, our warmest wishes on the occasion of the thirty-first anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. I would particularly like to express to you our pleasure at having as Secretary-General someone of your experience, ability and humanity.

In the past year, the United Nations has taken significant steps in the areas of human rights, economic justice and human settlements.

The coming into force this year of the Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights is a major step forward for the United Nations. These long-sought agreements on standards and principles of human rights must now be matched by an equal determination to apply them without discrimination. Canada, as a member of the Commission on Human Rights, will spare no effort in working for the full and effective implementation of the Covenants.

The decisions taken at UNCTAD IV mark an important stage in our common efforts to reduce disparities between developed and developing countries. To carry on dialogue in a world divided between wealth and poverty, better understanding and mutual confidence are essential. The outcome of UNCTAD IV augurs well for such dialogue — which is now being continued at the Conference on International Economic Co-operation, of which Canada is Co-Chairman. The process of negotiation aimed at narrowing the gap between rich and poor is both permanent and complex. In the pursuit of a more equitable international economic system, Canada is prepared to commit its efforts and its resources.

The United Nations' commitment to improving the quality of life found further expression at the Habitat Conference in Vancouver, of which Canada had the honour of being host. At Habitat, enormous progress was made in improving the understanding of human settlements issues throughout the world. Important recommendations were adopted. Now these must be translated into national and international actions.

This has been a time of adjustment and occasional frustration for the United Nations. During a difficult period, these accomplishments have constituted concrete proof, not only of the validity of the principles embodied in the Charter but also of the progress being made in their implementation.

I can assure you that Canada attaches importance to the work of the United Nations and will continue to be a loyal and constructive member.