

Mr. Lopes (President of the North American Model United Nations Board of Directors), Mr. Sayers (Secretary-General of this Assembly), distinguished visitors, UN delegates,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this evening for the concluding dinner of this week's Assembly. The United Nations is central to Canada's foreign policy, and I personally am a great supporter of the UN and its ideals.

Your own dedication to these ideals is evident, since many of you have devoted your reading week or have cut classes to be here. Indeed, I understand that, due to university budget constraints, many of you have had to bear your own travel expenses in order to spend this week in Toronto.

But budgetary crises have almost gone hand in hand with the UN itself since its creation. In fact, circumstances were so acute near the end of 1991 that regular articles appeared in the press speculating about the Secretariat's ability to meet its December payroll.

Having said that, I am pleased to say that Canada and a number of other stalwart members followed tradition and paid our 1992 assessments in full -- before the new year.

Whatever the UN's problems -- and there are some -- it would have been a great tragedy, not just for the organization, but for the world, if it had been allowed to founder because of a lack of financial support from its members.

But this problem -- and it is a significant one -- is not merely one of short-term cash flow. The worldwide recession and its impact on the ability of all member states to pay their dues, as well as the disappearance from the political map of states such as the U.S.S.R., which used to bear significant portions of the budget, place serious limitations on the UN's ability to operate to its full potential.

There is, of course, an obligation on the successor states to the Soviet Union to pick up their fair share of the responsibility for financing the UN, and we have, in fact, urged them to do so.

There is also the obligation on all other member states who contribute to and benefit from the UN's new-found vitality to meet their past and current obligations without undue delay. I am sure that this message will not be lost on the participants in this Assembly.

Ironically, while the organization's financial stability wavers, there are increasing demands on its resources almost daily and, on the part of the public -- not just in Canada, but around the world -- there is increasing faith in the UN as an instrument for positive progress. Many of these new expectations have arisen almost directly from the fact that the UN has finally been able to play one of its originally intended roles -- that of ensuring international peace and security. Its successful actions against Iraqi aggression in Kuwait, in particular, have invited more participation from the UN in other areas.

We have witnessed significant expansion in both the size and character of UN peacekeeping exercises. Cambodia and Yugoslavia particularly