

UNGA 44: ITEM 149
DECADE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Mr. President,

The item currently before us, a proposal for declaring 1990-1999 as a Decade of International Law, is one which most delegations agree has important implications. We fully share that assessment. After all, the United Nations Charter itself calls for progressive development of international law. Respect for the rule of law and recourse to peaceful methods for the settlement of disputes are cornerstones in the whole structure of international relations.

Canada thus supports in principle the draft resolution before us. Nevertheless, we believe that it is extremely important for the Decade's programme to be developed with realistically achievable objectives that are broadly acceptable. It should, among other things, give impetus to efforts of the international community to have States implement their international obligations more consistently, especially in the fields of human rights and counter-terrorism. In the same vein, the Decade should emphasize the concept of the primacy of international law rules concerning the threat or use of force. We must encourage States to resort to peaceful measures such as negotiation, mediation, judicial settlement and international arbitration to solve problems instead of turning to violent confrontation. The same approach should govern States' relations with national liberation movements: support for armed struggle and for resort to force should be avoided and, instead, the use of peaceful methods, so well provided for in international law, should be encouraged. The use of terrorist violence often brutalizes its perpetrators, so that the successor regimes they ultimately establish offer no greater hope of freedom or peace than the governments they have overthrown.

On a related topic, my delegation views the protection and preservation of the earth's environment as of paramount importance. The programme of the Decade should foster evolution of the rules of international law on State responsibility, to require States exploiting their resources to act more carefully so as to avoid harm to other States and the international community. In recent years, legal instruments