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## Do or die warning to United Nations General Assembly

*"If we are to make progress here, there must be an end to the sterile debates of recent years where the outcome is always a foregone conclusion. If the vitality of open debate is not restored to the UN then increasingly the important decisions affecting the fate of mankind will be made elsewhere and this organization and most of its Agencies will wither into insignificance and, eventually, unlamented oblivion."* Don Jamieson, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, addressing the thirty-second regular session of UNGA in New York on September 26, asked delegates who might consider his judgment too harsh or too pessimistic to recall "objectively" the reaction to UN proceedings by many "publics" in their own countries. "My own experience at home and around the world," declared Mr. Jamieson, "has been bad."

The Minister cited examples, offered suggestions for improvement and touched on some issues on the agenda for the current session. Excerpts from his speech follow:

Two of the main issues that will come before us at this session are the Middle East and Southern African situations. Last year we passed 20 resolutions on the Middle East and no less than 34 on questions related to Southern Africa. To what purpose was all that time and effort, not to mention money, expended? The answer is surely very little because many of those resolutions simply expressed moral judgments and were devoid of practical proposals for action. Furthermore, everyone knew they had little if any prospect of being implemented. Yet the vast and increasingly expensive machinery of the UN ground on not only through the 50 odd resolutions I have mentioned but through nearly 200 more, many in the same category and thus predestined to suffer the same fate. Already gathering dust, I suspect, is the 400-page compendium of these resolutions, most echoing almost word for word the deliberations of previous years.

### Suggestions for improvement

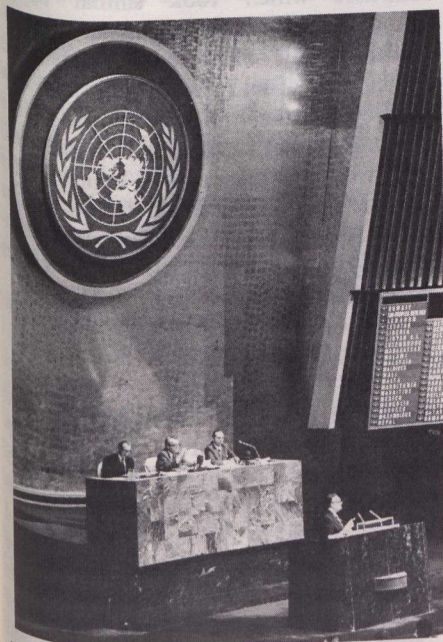
...Changing our collective habits will not be easy. We should scrutinize the agenda closely to resist the automatic re-inscription of old items and the addition of less essential new ones. We should group items so that similar debates will not take place in different committees on closely

related subjects. We should avoid the proliferation of resolutions which express the members' aspirations or objectives but do not contribute in a practical way to achieving them. A few short, precise and practical resolutions will have more impact than the many rambling and ineffective ones we now consider each year.

### Security Council

As a member once each decade of the Security Council, Canada has accumulated some experience but also had a chance to take a fresh look at its activities every time we return. So far this year, the Council has debated several significant issues in a sensible, restrained fashion. None of us would claim, however, that it has done much to enhance its position as the UN organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security....

I propose that the Security Council should begin meeting regularly at ministerial level. Fifteen ministers meeting together could give a new sense of life and political purpose to the Council. Instead of following a formal agenda, they could have a free discussion of major issues of international peace and security, based on a special report by the Secretary-General. The meetings should be held in an informal atmosphere, without a small



Crombie McNeill

Donald C. Jamieson, Secretary of State for External Affairs, addresses the UN General Assembly on September 26.

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