

Mr. President,

May I first congratulate you on your election as President of this Session and pledge Canada's full support. I would also like to wish the Secretary-General well after his recent surgery. His dedication and courage have been an inspiration to us all and we are thankful that we can continue to rely on his leadership.

In my first speech to the General Assembly two years ago, I described Canada as a "friend" of the United Nations. In fact, we are more than that. We believe this institution is essential to the safety of the world, and we defend it even when its actions are foolish or infuriating or wrong. Our country is thirtieth in population size in the world, but fourth in the size of our financial contribution to the United Nations system. Canada's commitment will not alter or change. But the commitment of Canada - and other countries like us - will not alone protect the United Nations from the erosion of respect which is slowly weakening the organization we built to bring the world together.

When we gathered last year to celebrate the 40th Anniversary, a sad irony faced us. The United Nations was becoming more necessary and less effective.

Who among us cannot list many issues that should be addressed and resolved here, but are not? Who among us has not thought of referring one or another issue to this forum but then held back for fear that debate would only serve to exacerbate our difference? Our instincts tell us that this is the right place for issues of global importance, but we often fail to raise them. That failure is the expression of our fear. It has led us more and more to resort to blocs, to bilateralism and even to unilateralism.