

Canada's reputation stands high in the world and needs no defence from me. It speaks for itself more eloquently than I could. And it speaks of a devotion to the rule of law that is among the most cherished values of Canadians. I will say no more on the subject, and I will not respond to accusations that clearly merit no response. But I will review the tactical purposes behind the accusations.

France has two major legal difficulties in this case. First, it has more claim than it has coast. Secondly, that coast belongs to remote island dependencies far removed from the mother country.

We have already seen how France addresses its first difficulty: it tries to lengthen the coast of St. Pierre and Miquelon by shortening the south coast of Newfoundland almost to the point of disappearance. Faced with its second difficulty -- the disadvantage of remoteness -- France strays even further from reality. It tries to make Canada look threatening and St. Pierre and Miquelon look vulnerable. Remoteness then works in France's favour: the islands take on a kind of orphan status and are entitled to special consideration from this Tribunal. Or so it is hoped.

Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Court, all this is melodrama. The French pleadings themselves repeatedly -- and quite properly -- emphasize the tradition of alliance and friendship that binds Canada and France. That tradition is quite at odds with any idea of a threat on one side and vulnerability on the other. And it is quite at odds with any suggestion that St. Pierre and Miquelon should have a large maritime zone, or a corridor to France, for reasons of security or self-sufficiency.

St. Pierre and Miquelon have never been self-sufficient. And the islands' location in North America can hardly be considered a disadvantage to them or to France, in terms of security or any other terms. To the extent that the islands depend upon Canada, they have found in Canada a reliable partner and a loyal neighbour. The record shows no ground for concern about security of access to or from the islands by sea through the Canadian 200-mile zone, or by air through Canadian territory for that matter.

As for access to resources, France urges that St. Pierre and Miquelon must be able to live without depending on the goodwill of Canada. But that goal is impossible, as France itself recognizes. In fact, the highly mobile fleet of St. Pierre and Miquelon needs access to the Canadian zone well beyond the French claim. In fact, it is not France's claim but France's 1972 Agreement with Canada that provides for the islands' wide-ranging fishery.