



Statements and Speeches

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THE UNITED NATIONS – A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

An Address by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Empire Club, Toronto, March 22, 1984.

When I last spoke to you, in February 1978, I talked about the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. Those negotiations reflected a hard-headed assessment of Canadian interests. I would like, as much as possible, to use the same approach to my topic today.

Why have I chosen to speak to you on "The United Nations: A Canadian Perspective"? Because I believe that we in Canada should think more – argue more, if you like – about this multilateral system that Canadians have done so much to help build, that has greatly benefited Canada over the years, and that is now in a particularly difficult period in its development.

Since returning in September 1982 to External Affairs, I have met on several occasions with the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar – a man we are fortunate to have at the helm of the UN at this time. He has pointed starkly to "the crisis in the multilateral approach in international affairs". He has warned that "we are perilously near to a new international anarchy".

What is Canada's stake in this crisis in the multilateral approach? Though it is often easier to assess the benefits from bilateral relationships, multilateralism remains central to the promotion of Canadian interests. This applies both to groupings of limited membership such as the Western Economic Summits, the Organization for Economic Trade and Development, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Commonwealth and Francophonie, and to global multilateral institutions. Canadian trade and Canadian jobs depend directly on the stability of the world monetary and trading systems underpinned by the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. This link is direct enough and obvious enough that there is a well understood economic logic to support, for example, our \$300 million annual contribution to the various international financial institutions.

Our interests in the United Nations are more diverse but still closely related. What benefits do we receive from our contribution of about \$350 million in 1983-84 to the organizations and agencies in the United Nations system? It is an impressive contribution – sixth largest over-all and twice that of the USA on a *per capita* basis. By domestic standards, it is slightly more than the amount spent annually for police services in metropolitan Toronto, but we still have good reason to look closely at what we receive in return.

Three specific examples will serve to introduce what is naturally a wide-ranging answer.

First is the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, signed by Canada in December 1982. That convention was the outcome of over a decade of UN negotiations in which we took a leading role. The convention
