

Oral Questions

has made very good comments about arms control and disarmament why his government just this week slashed by over 50 per cent funds to disarmament groups, down to a meagre \$111,000. Is this a commitment to peace that this minister and this government have by slashing funds for disarmament?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, no one questions the commitment to peace or to practical methods of arms control by this government. There is a program of restraint in place. It does apply to certain activities, including the Disarmament Fund.

The hon. member has raised questions with regard to the role of the United Nations in this crisis with respect to the Kurds and I think the House may be interested to know the current situation as Canada sees it.

The House will know that the European Community has proposed a sort of enclave under UN protection. We share some of the concerns of the Secretary General of the United Nations with respect to jurisdiction. But in the circumstances, we would nonetheless support that European Community proposal.

However, if the enclave idea is not acceptable, we have set out an alternative Canadian proposal. There was a discussion on Saturday between my office and Ambassador Yves Fortier. Yesterday afternoon, Ambassador Fortier, on behalf of Canada, made a formal proposal to Jean Claude Aimé, the Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, regarding an alternative Canadian proposal, which we believe avoids the problem of sovereignty. That proposal would involve—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, I assume the House is interested in the nature of the—

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Secretary of State.

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Mr. Speaker, our proposal involves two elements. It involves the sending into Iraq of a civilian United Nations presence which would have in the first instance a responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of delivery of humanitarian and other assistance. It would also assign to that civilian United Nations presence a sort of ombudsman role which would be able to guarantee, as best the world can, that undertakings with respect to amnesty are being honoured and would be able to offer some indication to

citizens of Kurdish origin in Canada and to concerned citizens around the world.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree that as much as we may welcome the proposals by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, it would be much more helpful to the members of this House if he had given a statement in the House and we had time to properly consider and respond to it.

I would like to put a question directly to the Prime Minister. Last fall the Prime Minister acted as the co-chair of the special summit on children. At that time he declared very directly that Canada was committed to the eradication of suffering of children around the world.

I think the Prime Minister would agree that there is no greater spectacle of children suffering than the many thousands of wounded and hungry children in the hills and mountains in the boundary areas of Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

I would ask the Prime Minister: In his capacity as the Chairman of that summit, will he not accept that he has a special obligation in the case of the suffering of the Kurdish children, and will he under the auspices of the UN organize a special meeting of all the participants who were engaged in that children's summit to come together to mobilize a major, comprehensive aid effort on behalf of the suffering children of Kurdistan. Is that not the kind of responsibility and leadership the Prime Minister could show today?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, indeed Canada co-chaired the World Summit for Children at the United Nations, and along with some 70 or 75 other countries, we undertook some obligations, all of which, with the support of members of Parliament, the government will respect.

My hon. friend raises a most serious question about not only the tragedy unfolding in Iraq, but also the special implications for children. It was with this in mind that the Secretary of State for External Affairs instructed the ambassador at the United Nations, Mr. Fortier, to meet yesterday with James Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, to discuss with him a series of options that would indeed help children in these circumstances. Canada made at that time a signal to the Executive Director our intention to make a very substan-