



Renewing the United Nations:

Leaders from all over the world will come to New York for the Millennium Summit. They will consider the challenges ahead, and what the United Nations can do to face them. Those leaders will be representing you, the peoples of the United Nations.

It is up to you to make sure they come here firmly resolved to take decisions which can lead to a better life for all of us, and for our children.

—UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan

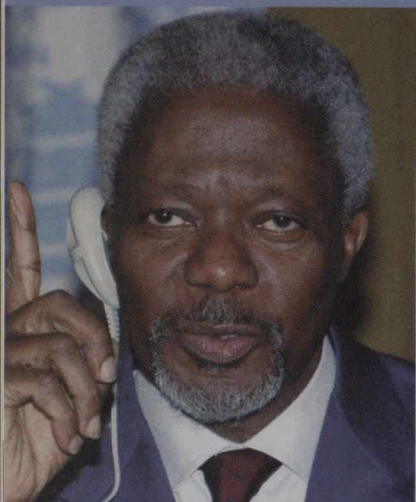


photo: CANAPRESS

What kind of United Nations does the world want in the 21st century? This question tops the agenda at the Millennium Summit, taking place September 6 to 8 at UN Headquarters in New York.

The Summit is being billed as the single largest gathering of heads of state and government in history. But it must be more than a celebration, says Secretary-General Annan: "It is essential that it should provide an opportunity for a 'moral recommitment' to the purposes and principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, and spur new political momentum for the international co-operation and solidarity that the peoples of the world increasingly demand."

A unique organization

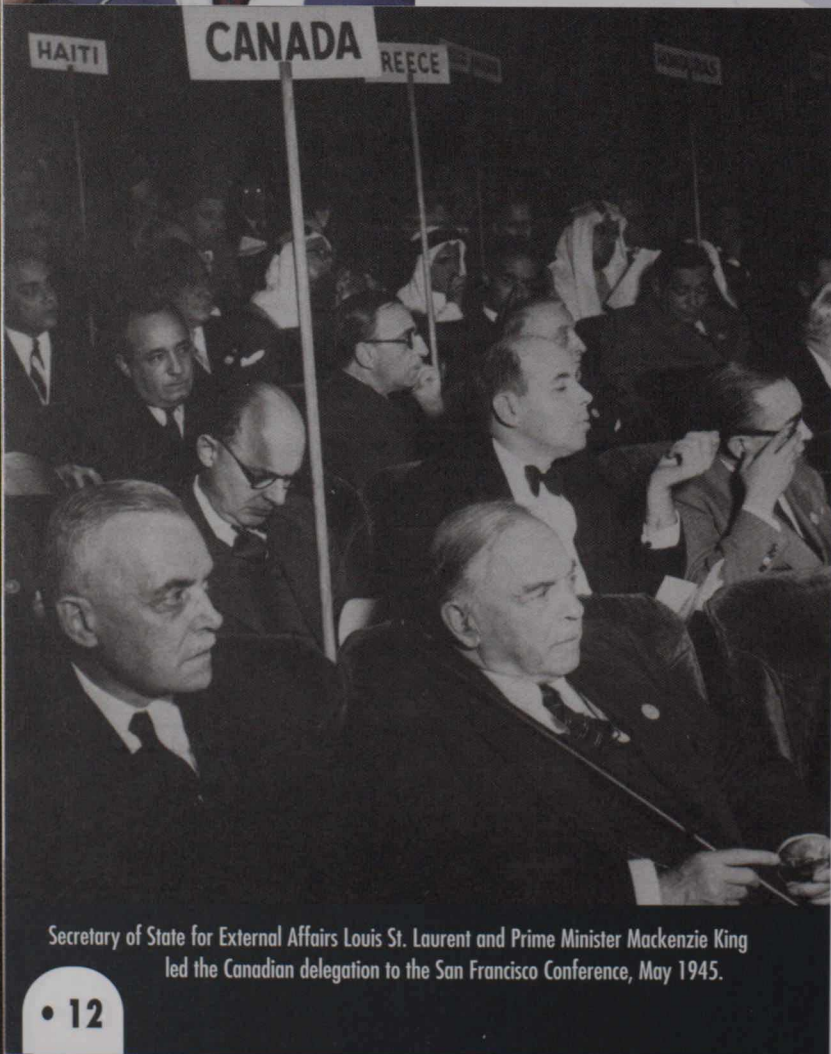
The United Nations was created under the UN Charter, signed on June 26, 1945, by 50 countries attending the San Francisco Conference. The organization officially came into being later that year on October 24, the date by which a majority of signatories had ratified the Charter in their national legislatures. The UN replaced the League of Nations, which had been established by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Canada participated in the San Francisco Conference and is one of the founding members of the United Nations.

The UN Charter sets out the basic purposes of the organization:

- to maintain international peace and security;
- to develop friendly relations among nations; and
- to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights.

The Charter also specifies principles to guide UN action:

- all member states are equal;
- international disputes are to be settled by peaceful means;
- members may not use force or the threat of force against other members; and
- all members must fulfil their Charter obligations and help the UN in any action it might take in accordance with the Charter.



Secretary of State for External Affairs Louis St. Laurent and Prime Minister Mackenzie King led the Canadian delegation to the San Francisco Conference, May 1945.

photo: National Archives of Canada

photo: United Nations