

6. Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on September 23, 1966, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin.

THE UNITED NATIONS AS A POWER FOR WORLD PEACE

It is my intention this morning to discuss several areas of endeavour which, in the opinion of the delegation of Canada, demand our particular attention if the United Nations is to develop as an influential force for peace in the world. I propose to say something about the Secretary-General and his office, the problems of establishing international peace and security, including peace-keeping. I propose to speak to you about the war in Vietman, about disarmament, about economic and social progress and about the grave problems in southern Africa.

I should like, first of all, to pay tribute to the leadership and example of the Secretary-General. He has done much to inspire our joint endeavours over the past five years. He has said that no man is indispensable in the function which he himself is performing with such distinction. But, notwithstanding the difficulties to which he has called attention, the guidance which he has provided to our work, his sense of responsibility, his qualities of compassion and understanding and, above all, his capacity to speak and to act in the name of mankind, are indispensable to the United Nations. I really fail to see, at this time, how they can be separated from the person of the Secretary-General. His departure would be a heavy blow.

May I say, too, that I strongly endorse the determination of the Secretary-General to maintain and develop his office as a vital reality within the United Nations system. In this, he is following the tradition established by Sir Eric Drummond in the days of the League of Nations and by his own predecessors in the United Nations.

Let me turn now to those tasks which require our collective understanding and goodwill. First, the general subject of peace-keeping. A year has gone by since the General Assembly established a committee to study all aspects of peace-keeping. A year has passed, too, since it was decided that the financial difficulties of the organization should be overcome by voluntary contributions from the whole membership. My Government regrets that, on both these issues, the past 12 months have seen little advance.

Little progress has been made in resolving the financial problems of this organization. It may be that some governments are awaiting the outcome of the study of the Committee of Fourteen. This report is now before us, and I hope that those who have not contributed as yet will do so now.

However, perhaps even more important, in the long run, than the need to meet the financial deficit is the failure of the Committee we set up last year to come to grips with the task of completing its comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations. It is easy to explain away this failure as an after-effect of the crisis which seized the Assembly two sessions ago, but we have had a year to think things over. Surely the time has come to solve this problem.

There are a small number of members which do not share the view of the majority about the nature and value of the contribution the United Nations has made—a contribution which it can continue to make—through its peacekeeping activities. My Government believes that the views of this minority must be respected, even if we do not share their views. We appreciate that we may have to accept the limitations thus imposed, particularly with respect to the positions held by some of the great powers on the principle of collective financial responsibility. But, even