



Statements and Speeches

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PLEA FOR WORLD PEACE AS UN CELEBRATES FORTIETH BIRTHDAY

Statement by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Fortieth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, September 25, 1985.

Mr. President, on behalf of Canada, I congratulate you on your election as president of this milestone session of the General Assembly. Your long career of devotion to the principles of the United Nations is recognized by this election, as well as the vitality of the democratic institutions of the government you represent.

With other spokesmen, I join in expressing Canada's grief at the suffering caused by massive earthquakes in Mexico. Around this tragedy, we have seen arising spontaneously across national boundaries a rallying of forces to complement the Mexican government's own extraordinary rescue operation. In times of such natural disasters, the world truly becomes a neighbourhood and our people extend both our prayers and our practical help. We were pleased to join yesterday in the consensus resolution adopted in this Assembly, expressing our joint solidarity with the Mexican people.

I would be remiss as a Canadian if I did not sadly recall that last week Canada and the UN lost one of our greatest soldiers and statesmen, General E.L.M. Burns. Canada was particularly proud that he was the UN's first commander of the United Nations Emergency Force and a practical architect of peace-keeping. But General Burns was also one of Canada's most thoughtful proponents of disarmament. His contributions truly embodied the best ideals of the Charter. We mourn his passing, but in reflecting on his dedication to the high principles and purposes of the United Nations we find an example that is inspiring for the years ahead.

At the age of 40, some people have what is termed a mid-life crisis. But this description does not apply to the United Nations. There may be multiple crises in the world system today, but at the age of 40, the UN is a long way from mid-life. In fact, viewed in the long range of history, the UN is still in its early years.

This perspective helps us to establish a more balanced and fairer assessment of the UN in this important anniversary year. Optimists would like to see the UN as the flowering of a world that has come together. Pessimists decry it for not having brought peace. Realists recognize that the UN has persisted in its global strategies for human security, despite the divisions among nations.

In its first 40 years, the UN has made an inestimable contribution to building a framework for a global system that responds to the technological interdependence and vulnerability of modern society. Technology has revealed the common qualities of the entire human family. Everyone wants to avoid the scourge of war. Everyone wants the opportunity for economic development. Everyone wants the guarantee of full human rights. The tackling of these common demands is the daily work of the United Nations.
