

Ambassador Fortier Stresses Hope

The following is the text of the address given by the Canadian Ambassador Yves Fortier to the First Committee of the 43rd United Nations General Assembly on October 18, 1988.

"It is noticeable that the statements being made here, and in the General Assembly itself, exhibit a degree of hopefulness such as has not been heard in this forum for several years. The reasons for this are not hard to find. In the relations between the two leading military powers, bellicose posturing has been displaced by sustained, serious negotiations which have already produced important agreements and hold out the promise of more. In the Gulf region, scene of the longest and deadliest war of this half century, the guns have been silenced and the negotiators have begun their work. In Afghanistan, foreign military forces are being withdrawn and the means for national reconstruction are being mobilized. In other regions long victimized by military conflict or foreign occupation, such as Namibia and Kampuchea, new voices of realism are being heard.

A great poet once referred to hope as 'a strange invention' which seems always to be intermingled with our fears—fears that our hopes cannot be realized. And yet without hope we cannot muster the boldness and daring needed to face down our fears and seek to resolve them. The expressions of renewed hope we are hearing are, I trust, an augury of the growing readiness of peoples and their Governments to address the real problems we confront and seize opportunities for their solution.

Hope that is not grounded on hard experience can be dangerously illusory. What has been achieved thus far remains fragile. Conflict continues in some areas and is scarcely held in check in others. Guns silenced are not guns abandoned. Negotiations alone cannot eliminate deep-seated enmities nor quickly meet long-neglected social and economic needs. Our central task



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must be to consolidate the gains that have been made and to build on them. We must aim to institutionalize peace. We must try to make peace contagious.

Calls for sweeping transformations of international institutions or prescriptions for the quick negotiations of agreements within a calendar of arbitrary deadlines are not the answer. That is the path of false hope and can lead only to disillusionment. On matters of international security, there can be no quick fixes. The central ingredients of success are patience, persistence and realism.

That, in fact, is the recipe that has begun to bring about what we must hope will be a remarkable and lasting transformation in East-West security relations. Careful, painstaking negotiation between the United States of America and the USSR has resulted in the welcome Treaty on the elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles—the INF Treaty—the first-ever agreement providing for real nuclear arms reductions. Moreover, the negotiating agenda between those two great powers remains encouragingly

crowded: reductions in strategic nuclear arsenals, on which major progress has already been made; the step-by-step limitation of nuclear tests, leading to their eventual elimination; the role of strategic defence in relation to outer space. Canada urges the two countries to persist in those negotiating efforts with a view to concluding, as soon as possible, further verifiable agreements.

Just as important, the members of the two major military alliances, as well as the other countries of Europe, are in unprecedented ways addressing issues relating to the conventional arms balance in Europe. Within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the 1986 Document of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, with its provisions for advance notifications, observations and international inspections of conventional military activities, is being effectively implemented. Additional confidence-building and security-building measures in Europe are to be negotiated. Further, within the same broad institutional framework, members of the two alliances are on the eve of launching negotiations toward a balance of conventional arms at lower levels in Europe.

None of that progress has occurred quickly or easily. There have been setbacks, and, indeed, many hurdles remain to be overcome. It is the firm view of the Government of Canada, however, that it is only through careful, step-by-step negotiating approaches, such as those that have begun to register significant achievements in the East-West context, that effective and lasting progress in arms control and disarmament can be accomplished.

It is cause for special satisfaction to the Government of Canada that there appears a reawakening within the international community to the effective and practical role the United Nations can play in promoting peace, security and disarmament. Its usefulness, for example, in facilitating the settlement of regional conflicts and in investigating alleged breaches of international treaties has been recently demonstrated. The timely award of the Nobel Peace Prize