

Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me take this opportunity to thank you for the excellent work that you have done in organizing this conference in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary Committee of the United Nations Association in Canada.

Distinguished guests and participants, Canada has chosen to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in a spirit of celebration and reflection. Canada is one of the most fervent defenders of this organization and of its strengthening by means of a sweeping reform. The contribution made by the UN in peacekeeping, human rights, the environment, health and other areas rightly deserves our heartfelt gratitude. We also have every reason to be proud of the role played by Canadians, who have earned a reputation as world leaders in several sectors of the UN. Yet we cannot help but observe that the UN, which aroused such optimism not so long ago, has been deeply shaken by the impact of recent conflicts. Does this mean that it should be dismantled? Let us instead demonstrate our ability to learn from history, from the successes and failures that we attribute to the UN (sometimes in unequal proportions) in order to ensure the revitalization of this organization, the only one that is truly universal.

A collective process of examination, calling for the participation of both individuals and governments, should continue far beyond the current year, and it must demonstrate vision and generosity in dealing with the basic issues of peace and security as well as development, which are only two aspects of the same problem. However, realism and candour are also necessary when setting the limits of the commitment that governments are willing and able to make.

The exercise begun on the occasion of the 50th anniversary must lead to decisions as to the course that the UN should chart at this crucial point in history, which is marked by uncertainty but also by the hope of finding lasting solutions to the terrible ills of our time. I am pleased that this hope has given rise to so many initiatives, both in Canada and in other countries. In this regard, I wish to note the important contribution made by the Global Governance Commission, which recently published its report.

I am thus very pleased that this conference is being held, and I hope that the proposals for realistic avenues of reform emerging from the discussions will help us to chart the course of the UN, which we so greatly need as a means of peace, security and development as we approach the 21st century.

Those who followed the opening of the 49th General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1994 will remember that Canada defined five key priorities designed to restore the reliability