

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

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**NOTES FOR A STATEMENT BY
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
TO THE FORTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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Canada

Mr. President,

I join with others in offering you my congratulations on the assumption of your important duties as President of the General Assembly. I am confident that your wisdom and experience will enable you to build on the proud accomplishments of your distinguished predecessors. Our ranks have increased since last year's general debate, and the United Nations family has now been enriched by the accession of seven new members: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Korea, South Korea, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia. To the representatives of these seven states, I would like to extend both a warm welcome and a pledge of Canada's continuing co-operation.

We meet this year at a time of opportunity and challenge. The pace and direction of events of the past few months have, in general terms, augured well for a more secure and more equitable world order, and for the ultimate triumph of a world dedicated to the rule of law. But progress has presented challenges. One revolution after another has unleashed long-simmering ethnic rivalries. The changes shaking the Soviet Union have exposed the fault lines of persistent economic and social tensions. Civil strife in Yugoslavia threatens the new peace of Europe. And growing numbers of people flee their countries of origin in the wake of instability, natural disasters or relentless poverty.

The challenge to the international community is one of adaptation, from a world centred on the individual nation-state to an interdependent world, from a world dominated by bilateral diplomacy to one in which multilateral institutions occupy a central place.

Our adaptation at a time of revolutionary change must be both national and international.

Canada is now in the process of making that kind of essential adaptation, in the face of domestic challenges. And it includes a fundamental discussion of our most basic internal political structures. The Government of Canada is unshakeable in its commitment to a prosperous and united Canada, and I am confident that Canadians will succeed in renewing our own Confederation through the spirit of flexibility, tolerance, compromise and optimism that we have always brought to this organization and to our many other international activities. We owe this commitment to our own people -- and to a world searching for stability, security and leadership at a time of profound and sometimes wrenching change.

Adaptation must also come to the body of doctrine and law by which states have conducted their diplomacy for centuries. In Yugoslavia, where the forces of ethnic hatred have visited death and destruction upon hundreds of people, we must not allow the principle of non-intervention to impede an effective international response. The concept of sovereignty is

fundamental to statehood, to international discourse, and, of course, to the United Nations itself.

The current conflict in Yugoslavia is, however, more than an internal affair. A collapse of effective governmental authority in Yugoslavia, if it continues, could escalate the degree of civil strife and endanger peace and security in neighbouring countries. So, the concept of sovereignty must respect higher principles, including the need to preserve human life from wanton destruction.

That is why Canada has asked the Security Council to consider the situation in Yugoslavia. On matters of peace and security, the Council speaks for all of us. Its actions carry the weight and authority of the entire world community. We believe that it can and should add that weight and authority to the efforts of the European Community and to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe to bring about a peaceful, negotiated solution.

Should it be decided that a United Nations peacekeeping operation would contribute to such a solution, I want to assure you that Canada will do its part, as we have done numerous times in the past when duty and obligation to the promotion of peace and stability are clear.

Mr. President, events within this Organization over the past year have been ground-breaking. Ordinary Canadians have been active players in these events, and we have participated with enthusiasm and energy as the UN has lived up to its Charter mandate. Canadians supported UN action in the Persian Gulf. They supported our country's participation in the efforts to restore Kuwaiti sovereignty because they recognized that fundamental international principles were at stake. But they would not have supported these actions without the clear authority of the United Nations Security Council.

Now, those same Canadians want us to build an even more effective UN, one that is able to work for comprehensive security everywhere, based on the international rule of law. The need to build such an overriding security framework is a central lesson of the events of the past year.

I believe, Mr. President, that we must look beyond a system which only inhibits armed confrontations. I believe that we need a new definition of the concept of multilateral security, a definition that takes into account the new and varied threats to global peace and security. These include the depletion of the ozone layer, the degradation of our seas, the debilitating scourge of illicit drugs, and worldwide epidemics such as AIDS, mass exoduses of people from one country to another, and the desperate poverty which persists in many parts of the world.

We recognize as well that our collective security depends upon democracy and respect for human rights.

The Effectiveness of the UN

Mr. President, the Gulf crisis showed that the United Nations has the will and the capacity necessary to repel military aggression.

But can we meet other challenges -- challenges to economic and social development, to human rights and freedoms, and to the environment?

For Canada, the single most important priority is to make the United Nations stronger, more effective and more relevant to today's challenges.

Mr. President, we can begin by taking a fresh look at both the UN Charter and the Security Council.

Few people, for example, realize that seven countries, which have joined the United Nations and are now serving it with distinction, are still identified as "enemy states." We can and should find ways to remove this archaic stigma.

As for the Council itself, we, like others, are looking for effective leadership from the current five members who today are working together in the kind of partnership envisaged in the Charter. Canada believes it is not too soon to start looking ahead to the day when key countries, representing all regions of the globe, are permanent members on the Security Council. In the meantime, our immediate priority is to ensure that the Council, in its present form functions with vision, effectiveness and wisdom.

As a starting point, we must strengthen the Council's capacity to take preventive or anticipatory actions.

An ability to assess impending flash-points, engage the necessary political will at the earliest stage, and act effectively and decisively in timely ways, will increase the lead time in reacting to events, and will reduce the security risk by minimizing the element of surprise. Indeed, the very capacity of the UN system to provide early and effective warning may, itself, discourage recourse to conflict.

I believe we can accomplish this within the existing Charter as long as the Secretary-General can continue to play a strong leadership role. We can be proud -- as can he -- that Javier Perez de Cuellar has achieved a number of remarkable accomplishments despite enormous constraints. In recognizing his achievements, we acknowledge that his office needs stronger

support to ensure that his successor can continue to provide the same inspired leadership.

At another level, for the UN to be efficient, all member States must respect their financial obligations. This means paying obligations on time and in full. Given its enhanced role, it is unacceptable that the UN should be paralysed by a lack of sufficient resources because assessments go unpaid.

Mr. President, Canada is committed to improving the UN's ability to channel the military resources of member states to peaceful purposes. This is essential for humanitarian purposes as well as to promote peace and security through peacekeeping, and through military enforcement when necessary. We look to increasing the capability of the Secretary-General to plan and conduct peace-keeping missions. We should also explore ways of turning these military resources to humanitarian relief purposes.

Regional Security

We are all aware that the UN Security Council's ability to deter aggressive action cannot by itself provide global security. In addition, we need effective regional security arrangements on a co-operative basis, arrangements that can address some of the underlying causes of insecurity and instability.

The new global climate for co-operation has created opportunities for regions to address their own problems without being used as dominoes in some wider ideological game.. It has also created obligations to do so.

This approach is crucial for long-lasting peace and security in regions such as Central and Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific. It has been essential for the progress towards peace in Cambodia and the solution of other regional conflicts.

In the Middle East problems remain, but we believe that solutions to these difficult problems are now a little closer. Canada will continue to support constructive initiatives such as the current efforts of the United States, based on the principles enshrined in Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. We call for direct negotiation between the parties concerned as the only route to a just and lasting peace. We continue to hope that a peace conference can open the door to those negotiations.

In the meantime, all countries can make particular efforts in the coming session to demonstrate their sensitivity to the parties directly concerned. Within our own purview, a decision by this General Assembly to rescind the infamous Zionism is Racism resolution would send a powerful and positive signal.

Arms Proliferation: A Canadian Initiative

Mr. President, renewed efforts to design a comprehensive and effective framework dealing with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are also absolutely essential. The Gulf conflict showed that conventional arms, as well as weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, can destabilize whole regions. Since 1950, the world has suffered 125 wars which have killed 25 million people, almost all as a result of conventional weapons.

How many more conflicts, how many more deaths, how many more destitute refugees does the international community need before we apply the necessary political commitment to eliminating these threats?

Canada was among the first nations to call for definitive action. In February, our Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, characterized as insane the build-up of weapons that had taken place in Iraq. At that time, he launched an initiative which called for a number of concrete steps:

- universal adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its indefinite extension beyond 1995;
- immediate conclusion of a global, comprehensive and verifiable convention banning the acquisition, possession and use of chemical weapons;
- strengthening of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; and
- transparency of international arms sales, particularly by the establishment of a UN register.

We are, with others, moving ahead with proposals to address the areas of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. With respect to conventional weapons, transparency is vital -- not only for knowing what is happening in the arms trade, but also for building confidence and trust. A global arms transfer register that is universal, non-discriminatory and effective is long overdue. That register should include national inventories as well. And we must be prepared to act on the basis of that information.

We applaud the historic advances made over the past year in East-West arms control. We urge all parties to ratify and implement the Conventional Forces in Europe and Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) Treaties as soon as possible; and then to begin anew to reduce unnecessarily large arsenals further.

We are not naive. Every country has a legitimate right to assess its own defence needs, and act accordingly. But no country,

under guise of defence, has the right to accumulate arms that are intended to destroy its neighbours. Equally troubling, of course, are excessive expenditures on arms which sacrifice other important priorities such as health, education and agriculture.

The choice is there for all of us to make: instruments of destruction or tools for peace.

The Effectiveness of Humanitarian Relief

Assistance to victims of natural, economic and political disasters has always been a priority of the United Nations. Yet the UN response to these crises has lost its edge, dulled by quarrels among agencies and jealous hoarding of admittedly scarce resources.

In the face of human tragedy these practices are inexcusable and intolerable. It is time for the appointment of a senior official for humanitarian relief and disaster assistance who can organize international responses to disaster with dispatch and compassion.

Reinvigorating the effectiveness of the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization, and stronger links between New York and Geneva, can provide inter-agency responses that are needed, coherent and focussed. We support the establishment of a new UN fund to provide flexibility for humanitarian relief at the onset of a disaster.

Developing Countries

Despite the fiscal constraints that are affecting virtually all countries in the world, Canada believes that a strengthened, more effective United Nations must continue its focus on helping the poorest among us.

Developing countries are making major efforts to reform their political and economic systems. Unhappily, in many countries, especially those in Africa, as dramatically confirmed in the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Program of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, debt service obligations continue to far exceed the capacity to pay. That challenge has been severely compounded by drought, desertification, environmental degradation and disease, and by the migration of desperate people fleeing these perils.

What are the answers? While they may be complex, they are not new. The goal of sustainable development depends upon participatory democracy; open, market-based economic policies; sound economic management; and an orderly international trading system which we are trying to ensure in the Uruguay Round of the multilateral trade negotiations. With ideological blocs now

dissolving, we must not invent new economic blocs to divide us once again.

Human Rights, Women's Equality and Children's Rights

Over the past year, Mr. President, we have seen remarkable progress in the area of human rights. For example, South Africa has taken important steps toward dismantling apartheid and constructing a non-racial democracy. Much, however, remains to be done. The 1993 World Conference should become a focal point for enhancing international efforts to promote a universal culture of human rights. As we approach this conference, we must ask how the UN Centre for Human Rights in Geneva can become a more vigorous and vocal watchdog for human rights. Given the priority we attach to human rights as one of the three primary objectives of the Charter, we must build the institutional capabilities of the UN system so that it can perform its functions effectively. The discrepancy between our goals in the human rights field and the modest means at the disposal of the Secretary-General is becoming increasingly anomalous.

Events of recent months have also focussed increased and deserved attention on democratic institutions. We all applaud those countries that have held free and fair elections in the past year. But democracy is more than an electoral process. It is a way of thinking, and it requires institutional support, including a free press and the vigilant protection of an independent judiciary. At this session of the General Assembly, we intend to pursue a resolution on the independence of the judiciary.

The United Nations must also intensify its work to achieve equality for women. Although the UN has taken some important steps to promote gender equality since the proclamation of the International Women's Year and the UN Decade for Women, the majority of the world's women still lag far behind men in power, wealth and opportunity.

By its own actions and in its own operations, the United Nations must provide leadership on all issues of women's equality. A long overdue step would be to ensure the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat by appointing more women to senior positions.

Greater energy and vigour must be brought to bear in the implementation of forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, including programs designed to improve literacy. Efforts to ensure that women participate fully in the development process must be pursued. Beyond considerations of social justice and equity, it is time that we realized that no nation can be fully developed until all of its citizens have not only the

opportunity, but also the ability to contribute their talents, intelligence and energy to that goal.

A key human rights challenge is to improve the lives of the world's children. This includes not only full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also the ambitious goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children and tabled by Prime Minister Mulroney at last year's General Assembly.

I would like, Mr. President, to express Canada's pleasure at the follow-up that is occurring under the aegis of UNICEF. As for our own follow-up, we have taken several initiatives in order to increase awareness about children's issues and to encourage co-operation across Canada.

Environment

In just eight months world leaders will gather in Rio de Janeiro for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It is an opportunity to launch a concerted shift to more sustainable forms of development, to integrate environmental concerns into economic development.

It is an opportunity to infuse our efforts to protect the international environment with the political will required for success. It is an opportunity to forge an international consensus that will prevent fracturing our efforts into an unbridgeable divide between North and South.

The Rio conference is not an optional occasion, and we should recognize now, well in advance of our deliberations, that the price of failure will be high indeed.

From our perspective, a good package at Rio would consist of four elements: the Earth Charter dealing with principles; Agenda 21, setting out actions; Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity; and a Statement of Principles on Forests. And for this package to succeed, we will have to ensure that political commitments are made for the necessary resources, the transfer of technology and the adaptation of institutions.

Now that three of the four preparatory meetings have been held, the results can be assessed. And I fear that we have not overcome the two great risks that the UNCED process faces: disinterest on the part of the governments of many developed countries, and a slide towards two solitudes of rich and poor.

It is true that we in Canada are worried about climate change, the loss of species, pollutants in the Arctic food chain, ocean resources and forests. But, we recognize that, for developing

countries, eliminating poverty, ensuring adequate nutrition and eradicating disease are top priorities and are inextricably linked to environment. We cannot find solutions to one set of problems without acting upon the other.

Environment and development must become a joint preoccupation. We know that developing countries need assistance to implement sustainable development. UNCED must address that issue head on. It must come to grips with the key cross-sectoral issues, namely, human settlements; poverty and sustainability; financial resources; technology transfer; and the international economic environment including questions of terms of trade and debt.

Mr. President, an important distinction between UNCED and other major conferences is the vital role played by the many sectors outside of government. Youth, women, indigenous people, business and industry, labour, the world's cities, both environmental and developmental non-governmental organizations, universities and colleges and scientific associations with competence and relevance have been actively participating in the UNCED process. These sectors will be in attendance at UNCED to undertake parallel activities focussing on their contributions to the implementation of sustainable development. They will be writing their own chapters of Agenda 21. And the conference should be structured to facilitate their special and important contributions.

Mr. President, there are simply no viable alternatives to practical, future-oriented results.

Conclusion

As we begin this 46th General Assembly, the challenges we face are as great as the opportunities. Throughout our deliberations, we must constantly remind ourselves that we are not here to represent blocs, nor to promote ideologies, but to represent people:

"We the peoples of the United Nations."

Never have these words meant more or held more promise. But, words alone are not enough. They cannot turn famine into bounty, discrimination into equality, repression into freedom, or brutality into compassion. They will mean little if we fail to give ourselves the tools for effective action or if we succumb to the temptation of unilateralism.

Mr. President, Canada is determined not only to honour those words, but to ensure that this Organization has the means to put them into practice. Canadians want to live on a planet which is

peaceful, prosperous, and just. We have it in our power to build such a world.

We must build it nation by nation, individual by individual.

We are encouraged by recent events and the role that the UN has played.

Let us move from strength to strength for all the peoples of the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.