



Statements and Speeches

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REDEDICATION TO UN VITAL FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND BRIGHT ECONOMIC FUTURE

Address by the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Thirty-Seventh Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 27, 1982

...I am very pleased to have the honour once again of addressing the General Assembly after an interval of seven years.

In an international perspective, seven years is not a long time. Yet in that interval, profound changes have imposed themselves on the world community — changes that have distanced us from the relatively optimistic days of the mid-Seventies.

Simply stated, the world at present is facing acute economic and political crisis. World economic conditions have deteriorated sharply, with devastating consequences on the aspirations of all nations, rich and poor alike. Political upheaval has driven the international community toward recurrent instability. And these forces are closely linked. Political crises generate economic consequences; economic dislocations breed political instability.

How can we chart a course for our institutions that will bring us through this period of grave economic dislocation and dangerous political tension, and serve the interests of all members of this General Assembly?

When our present institutions such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade first took shape, there was hope of maintaining a network of relationships which would match the complexity of postwar interdependence and help to stabilize it. Today the need to manage interdependence is even more pressing. But in the present crisis there is a disturbing tendency to discount and discredit multilateral institutions. Because the maze of international problems has become more resistant to conventional solutions, attacks are being made on the institutions through which solutions are being approached. The United Nations, in particular, has been the object of much criticism.

Surely we have learned by now that interdependence is a compelling reality, for better or for worse; no nation acting alone can hope to resolve its problems in isolation from others. Multilateralism — whatever its specific instrument — offers the main hope we have of deflecting predatory political and economic responses, on a global scale, that all too easily might emerge from a prolonged period of uncertainty and fear.

But let there be no mistake. The credibility and effectiveness of multilateral institutions depend fundamentally on the political will of individual nations and their leaders — the will to create a collective response to serious domestic and international problems.

Most countries, developed and developing, are now grappling with high rates of inflation. Slow or stagnant growth, and international payments imbalances, compound already serious debt problems. Record high unemployment in many countries threatens the social and political fabric of our societies and feeds protectionist sentiment. At the international level, economic crisis is having a devastating effect on growth prospects and on development assistance. Debt servicing problems have reached proportions that impose considerable strain on the international financial system.

The consequence has been an increasing tendency towards economic parochialism. Pressures for short-term relief put at risk the multilateral system, and narrow the longer-term prospects for all of us. These pressures must be resisted.

The collective response to the current economic situation was extensively discussed at the annual meeting of the IMF/World Bank held in Toronto. I was encouraged by the determination of participants at this meeting to treat economic problems as matters of common concern requiring common action.

**Themes of
importance**

I would like to underline two important themes. First, the magnitude of the financial difficulties many of our countries face makes it imperative that the IMF have adequate resources to ensure that it can continue to play its vital role in promoting adjustment in member countries. That is why Canada supports a substantial increase in quotas during the Eighth Review.

Second, the current economic situation has meant that development assistance has become even more essential for a number of developing countries, and it is important that bilateral and multilateral flows continue. We welcomed the agreement reached at Toronto to ensure an adequate level of funding through the life of IDA VI.

The tendency to turn inward economically is also exerting strain on the multilateral trading system. Protectionist sentiment arising from economic dislocation is difficult for all governments to deal with, my own included. But it is absolutely essential that we manage these pressures collectively, to avoid undermining the GATT. That organization has been enormously beneficial in promoting world economic growth in developed and developing countries. Any serious weakening of the GATT through beggar-thy-neighbour policies would have the ultimate effect of making beggars of us all. The GATT can and should be strengthened.

Canada will chair the 1982 annual session of the GATT Contracting Parties, which will be held at the ministerial level in November. We regard this session as a signi-

ficant test of our collective determination to manage an interdependent system.

**Development
assistance**

Intense preoccupation with domestic economic concerns also confounds our attempts to persevere with development assistance programs. What should be our response to the inescapability of shrinking resources? How do we face the difficulties in generating increased development assistance flows?

We should all — national donors and multilateral agencies alike — rationalize deployment of available resources for maximum possible effect. The best results can be obtained from this process of compulsory selectivity only if donors focus on areas of special national expertise and resources. Canada, for example, has chosen to concentrate its efforts in three particular areas which draw upon considerable national experience. These are the food and agriculture area; energy, specifically petroleum exploration; and human resources.

Another response to shrinking resources should be to make full and timely use of every opportunity for enhanced co-operation. In this connection, I am disappointed with the lack of progress made on global negotiations since the Versailles Summit. Canada believes that the text of a compromise resolution worked out at Versailles represented a significant step in the effort to find a formula for launching global negotiations. I regret that it has not been possible to find a basis for real negotiations.

Economic problems are all the more vexing and potentially dangerous because they are bound up with serious political instability. Political instability produces consequences extending far beyond the immediate region in which conflict has erupted. In a shrinking world, local vulnerabilities and tragedies become the common concern of us all.

We have witnessed the long agony of Lebanon and, no more than then days ago, the horror of the Palestinian massacre. These terrible events bring home to us in stark fashion the price that is paid when solutions to political problems are sought through military means, when feuds between nations, between peoples, between political factions, take the place of negotiations, when the instruments the international community has created to settle differences and prevent human suffering are misused or ignored.

Middle East

I want to emphasize Canada's strong support for Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and our firm endorsement of the Security Council's calls for the withdrawal of Israel from West Beirut and from the whole of Lebanon. No foreign forces should remain without the full consent of the government of Lebanon; otherwise stability will not return to that ravaged country.

Equally important, efforts must be intensified now to grapple with the problems at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict. More than ever, the tragic events of the past

few months illustrate the need for a just and permanent solution which assures the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza, and the right of Israel to exist in security and peace. Important proposals of such a solution have recently been made; the US proposals of September 1 in particular offer opportunities for progress which should be vigorously pursued.

Other tension areas

Other arenas of conflict continue to contribute to the generally high level of international tension. Events in Poland remain an object of our particular attention, not only because of concern for the basic rights and freedoms of the Polish people, but because of serious implications for stability in the heart of Europe.

In Afghanistan and Cambodia, we witness agonizing, protracted, and deplorable military occupations which are in sharp contradiction with the aims and ideals of this organization and its Charter. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, continue to violate the sovereignty of their victims and to ignore resolutions adopted by this Assembly. Once again this year, resolutions are before this Assembly on Afghanistan and Cambodia; I urge all member states to support those resolutions.

The Korean Peninsula has long been an area of tension and concern. We are encouraged, however, by the proposals made earlier this year by the President of the Republic of Korea seeking dialogue and reconciliation without conditions, and we hope for the greater integration of the Peninsula into the international community.

The extent to which local or regional conflicts draw their energy from mutually-antagonistic ideological systems is also cause for considerable concern. In recent years, the breakdown of *détente* and an increasing anxiety over the unpredictability of events have fuelled public fears of nuclear war. Our peoples fear that everything is at risk: the economic and technological systems which sustain us, the political and social systems which underpin them, and the very biosphere which permits the existence of life itself.

Arms control and disarmament

The world has high hopes for the second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament. When the session ended without having reached final agreement on a comprehensive program of disarmament, there was much disappointment and frustration. However, a disservice is done to the Special Session, and to the UN as an institution, if it is simply dismissed as a failure. Of course the results were disappointing. But then, the expectations of many were probably unrealistically high given the prevailing international climate. Moreover, in this climate, it is essential that the campaign for nuclear disarmament be waged at the negotiating table. My country strongly supports the present negotiations in Geneva to limit and reduce the level of nuclear arms.

Canada has chosen to contribute to the arms control and disarmament process by concentrating on the vital issue of verification. We are doing this through participating

in the international seismic data exchange and by substantially increasing research in verification. I would appeal to other member states to consider how their particular circumstances and resources might be drawn upon to contribute to the arms control process. It is basically the same question as with development: given the need for selectivity, what can you contribute?

I have evoked today a set of perplexing and inter-related economic and political problems. What is the UN's capacity to respond to these? The question is an urgent one, because the UN — with its Specialized Agencies — addresses virtually the entire range of human concerns.

Within the UN, crisis management capacity has been called seriously into question by divisions within the Security Council, by an erosion of the constitutional division of authority between the Security Council and this Assembly, and by a cycle of ineffectual resolutions. We have seen an increasing tendency to introduce extraneous polemical issues in the UN Specialized Agencies, with a diminution of their effectiveness and credibility. Official spokesmen of key UN member states have expressed skepticism regarding the organization.

To counter attacks on the UN, from within and without, we must more closely bind our policies and our behaviour to the principles expressed in the Charter.

**The UN's role
in international
law**

We must also vigorously reaffirm the singular contributions that the UN has made to the development of international law. As the Secretary-General explained at length and with eloquence in a speech delivered last month in Montreal, the United Nations plays a unique and absolutely essential role in the promotion of the rule of law. It is *only* the UN, with its virtually global scope, which has the capacity to play that role.

This year the third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea succeeded in producing a profound achievement: a comprehensive Constitution for the oceans of the world. The conference could not have produced such a massive convention without the active support and participation of all nations during the long years of negotiation. We deeply regret that the conference was not able to adopt the text of the convention by consensus. No state can remain aloof from the regime, and we must not be swayed by any attempts to undermine it.

The UN has succeeded in making human rights violations a legitimate subject of international scrutiny, and it is significant that the Secretary-General has identified human rights promotion as a priority area. Canada will support the Secretary-General in these efforts. Effective procedures must be worked out to deal with flagrant violations of human rights.

A role of critical importance for the UN is the peaceful resolution of disputes. However

maligned this organization may be in its efforts to resolve disputes, it can achieve notable successes. In Namibia, the UN has worked out a balanced settlement plan which should bring Namibia to independence peacefully, and has obtained for that plan general acceptance. The substantial progress that has been made must be attributed, in part, to the dedication and constructive approach of the Front Line States and the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). We hope that remaining problems will be quickly resolved.

The appointment of a new Secretary-General has come at a time when the UN is facing unprecedented problems, and when the need for institutional reform has become obvious. In his first annual report, the Secretary-General has addressed this need in direct and specific terms. He has put forward several innovative suggestions, in particular directed at a more effective Security Council. He has himself undertaken to play a more direct role in bringing urgent matters before the Council. These specific proposals — and Javier Perez de Cuellar's commitment to administrative streamlining — are very welcome and should be encouraged. Pragmatic reforms *must* be made, or the UN will lose its validity as a forum for international negotiations, not only for the promotion of peace and security, but also for the shaping of our economic future.

The aims of the institutions we have invented are under considerable and potentially crippling strain. We must rededicate those institutions, and the driving force of our determination must be a sense of shared vulnerability.

The present crisis demands intelligence and will. Intelligence must lead us to a more profound understanding of political and economic forces; our will must reside in commitment to those national concessions dictated by our mutual dependency. We cannot, must not, allow mutual antagonisms or self-absorption to divert our attention from the full range of difficulties we face, and which we must face together.