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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO THE 49TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Canada

HIGHLIGHTS

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. A number of recent events have put the UN's preventive and intervention mechanisms to the test.

Canada asks that the reforms of the UN system be augmented and accelerated. More than ever, the community of nations and states needs a strong, credible international institution equipped with the proper tools to face the challenges that await it at the dawn of the 21st century.

In the following speech, the Government of Canada puts forward the five main initiatives that must be undertaken to give back to the UN system all the vigour and flexibility that its creators intended and that are more than ever necessary:

- Strengthening the UN system's capacity for preventive action
- An in-depth review of the UN's economic and social activities
- Strengthening the UN's rapid intervention capability
- Improving the functioning of UN decision-making bodies
- Putting the UN on a sound financial footing

These initiatives aim not only at giving the United Nations the second wind it needs but also at reinforcing its credibility. The 50th anniversary next year must be more than a simple celebration, it must mark the start of a new era for the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman:

Canada is very pleased that you have been elected and is certain that you will tactfully and effectively assume responsibility for supervising our work. Mr. Chairman, you can count on our full co-operation.

Canada has always had a special place for the United Nations in its foreign policy. As I speak to you here for the first time as Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am reminded of something one of my illustrious predecessors, Lester B. Pearson, said about the United Nations. He said: "We must cultivate international ideals, develop international policies, strengthen international institutions, above all the United Nations, so that peace and progress can be made secure."

The government that I represent shares his broad and noble vision of the role and place of the UN. In order to face the challenges that await it at the dawn of the 21st century, more than ever, the international community needs a strong, credible multilateral institution equipped with the tools for fulfilling our expectations.

These challenges are peacekeeping and international security, as well as development, justice, democracy, human rights and the fight against inequalities. At a time when we are preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UN, there is no more urgent task than intensifying our efforts for reform in order to give our organization the second wind it needs. Let us draw inspiration from the vision and enthusiasm of the people who wrote the Charter of the United Nations 50 years ago.

Mr. Chairman, the extensive upheavals that have shaken our planet since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War can be symbolized in a few images.

I am thinking of the moving image of President Nelson Mandela taking the oath of office as democratically elected president of South Africa and the historic handshake between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] Leader Yasser Arafat.

For these people and those in Cambodia, El Salvador and perhaps Mozambique and Angola who have found the road to peace with the help of the United Nations, the future is filled with hope.

There is also hope in Haiti, where a courageous people has been subject for too long to oppression and misery. We will share their joy in finally welcoming to his native land President Aristide, a living symbol of nascent democracy.

But there are also unbearable images of the victims in the market in Sarajevo and the sea of humanity fleeing the killings in Rwanda.

The international community cannot remain indifferent to the conflicts that threaten the lives of millions of innocent people and expose them to the worst violations of their most fundamental rights.

Recent experience shows us that only a concerted and determined effort on the part of the international community can solve these problems.

It is no easy task. Faced with the problems in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda or even Haiti, some people are tempted to give up and wonder if the United Nations is wrong in trying to resolve essentially domestic conflicts that have numerous complex causes.

Canada does not share this opinion. We think that, despite these problems, the Security Council is on the right track, even though the steps it has taken have not always proved capable of solving all the problems.

Consistent with our beliefs, we have made a tangible contribution to the UN operations as far as our circumstances permit.

The Canadian contribution to peacekeeping operations in the territories of the former Yugoslavia totals more than 2000 soldiers and civilian police officers. The Canadian government decided a few days ago to again renew the mandate of its troops for a six-month period. Canada has always been convinced that there could be no military solution to the Yugoslavian conflict. It is because we wish to give peace another chance that we have chosen to maintain our contribution to UNPROFOR [UN Protection Force].

We have also responded to the Secretary-General's appeal for help in the tragedy of Rwanda. For two months our country was the only one providing an air bridge to Kigali. Presently there are 600 Canadian soldiers serving under the flag of the United Nations. Many Canadian NGOs [non-governmental organizations] have mobilized to provide help to those in distress.

We will also be at the scene in Haiti with 600 soldiers and 100 police officers when the time comes to deploy the UN peacekeeping force. Our participation is a logical sequel to our numerous efforts of the past three years to restore the democratic process in this country to which we are attached by language, geographical proximity and the many personal ties between our peoples. The Haitian people can count on Canada's lasting help as they go about rebuilding their economy.

We are also contributing to the Middle East peace process. We are tackling with determination the task entrusted to us by the international community as gavel of the multilateral Working Group on Refugees. Our objective is to contribute to the

construction of a renewed region where, 10 years hence, no one would consider himself or herself a refugee. We are providing substantial financial assistance to the Palestinian people's reconstruction projects. We would favourably consider the sending of peacekeepers if the need should arise, thereby perpetuating a lengthy tradition of Canadian participation in the region's peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Chairman, the economic and social problems facing the international community often receive less headline attention than the armed conflicts. However, they are every bit as urgent.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world continue to be destined for a life of poverty. For whole sectors of humanity, such basic needs as a proper diet, drinking water, education and medical care are more of a dream than a reality.

Certain parts of the developing world are currently experiencing remarkable advancement, while others, particularly the African continent, are sinking deeper into misery and despair.

It is estimated that there are an unprecedented 19 million refugees and displaced persons in the world. We are witnessing a massive movement of people that none of our societies is able to manage without the co-operation of the entire international community.

The recent Cairo conference revealed the urgent need for effective measures to cope with the problems of population and development, problems that cannot be resolved without giving full recognition to the essential role of women.

Our ability to translate into reality the concept of sustainable development will have a direct impact on the daily lives of our fellow citizens.

The fishermen of Newfoundland and the Maritime provinces of Canada are all too familiar with this problem: their livelihood has disappeared through the plundering of fish stocks in international waters off our shores. I would like an agreement to be reached without delay on fishing on the high seas. After all, it is not just a matter of the loss of a lifestyle in a region in my country, but also the loss of a non-renewable natural resource.

Mr. Chairman, we could easily add to the list of pressing problems that I have just mentioned. And no one can challenge the fact that all of these problems — from peacekeeping to development, including the fight against AIDS, drug trafficking, the protection of human rights and the environment — require a determined, co-ordinated effort on the part of the international community.

A great deal has been done over the past few years to help our multilateral institutions to effectively face these numerous challenges. However, we must admit that our institutions are still far from being ready.

Too often, the intervention of the United Nations comes too late, is too slow and is carried out under inadequate conditions.

The lack of political will on the part of the member states cannot be blamed on the Secretary-General. On the contrary, I would like to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General and his assistants, especially the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. They have done more and better than one is entitled to expect from a private institution with the most elementary resources, lacking even a solid financial foundation.

We must fully assume our responsibilities and give the UN the tools required to successfully fulfil its unique mandate. However, it seems that we are unable to collectively take a second look at the habits of the past.

We invest too much energy in activities of marginal use and in unimportant quarrels when there is an emergency right under our noses.

We waste valuable resources by allowing all sorts of institutions and agencies created over the years to jealously protect their independence and resist changes when the circumstances require a pooling of energies.

As a result of our extreme reticence to implement administrative reforms, we are handicapping the only institution on which we can depend when modern and flexible management methods would enable us to respond much more effectively to the needs of the hour.

Mr. Chairman, Canada asks that the reforms of the UN system be augmented and accelerated. We must do more and better with the resources at our disposal.

Efforts should be concentrated on the following five major priorities.

Firstly, we must strengthen the UN system's capacity for preventive action.

The UN already has a number of tools for detecting power struggles, and can use a variety of mechanisms to try to eliminate problems before crises break out. We are not at a loss for information, rather we need the ability to analyse, develop appropriate strategies and above all mobilize energy from all components of the system.

To act rapidly, the UN must be able to count on qualified human resources, available on short notice, to complement its own personnel. This is why Canada has prepared for the Secretary-General an inventory of resource persons suited to missions of good offices or specializing in elections, human rights, the administration of justice and other such fields.

At the first Summit in January 1992, the Security Council recognized that "non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to international peace and security." Let us recognize once and for all the need to expand the traditional concept of security, and mobilize all the components of the UN system in order to attack conflict at its very roots.

We also feel that the preventive capacity of the UN system would be strengthened if we better employed the expertise of those who have direct knowledge of the field. ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council of the United Nations] should periodically hold public hearings, similar to those held last June on the Development Agenda, with a view to assisting the UN system to better anticipate problems and develop strategies for attacking the economic and social causes of conflicts. The findings of its hearings could be provided to the Security Council and the Secretary-General so they can develop appropriate preventive measures.

Any strategy for preventing armed conflicts also involves pursuing tangible disarmament objectives. Canada has established two priority objectives for the next few years: nuclear non-proliferation and the control of conventional arms.

Nuclear arms control and disarmament is happening: we are continuing negotiations on a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to ban nuclear testing for all time. Canada is working in the Conference on Disarmament to secure a mandate for negotiations on a convention to prohibit the production of fissile material for weapons purposes. Together, these treaties will have the effect of constraining and preventing a future nuclear arms race.

In 1995 we will have to decide the fate of the world's nuclear non-proliferation regime — the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). For Canada, there is only one option: the NPT must be indefinitely extended. I urge all governments to support this option, which will allow for the continuation of a crucial instrument to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons technology and provide new impetus to reduce existing stocks.

We must also recognize that, although the threat of nuclear weapons is of prime concern, the ongoing use of conventional weapons is an equally dangerous and very real threat to peace and security.

The task of controlling conventional weapons is the responsibility of every government. Huge sums are being spent each year purchasing such weapons, often to the detriment of services essential to the public, such as education and health care. Those who are more concerned about the size of their military arsenal than about the welfare of their people cannot expect to receive international aid without conditions.

The recently established UN Conventional Arms Registry is a start, and I urge member states to make information available to the registry as Canada has done.

More can be done, however. For example, next year we will be reviewing the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons that deals with land mines. The abuse of land mines is responsible for continued suffering and death by civilians long after the fighting has stopped. We must strengthen the convention by extending its scope to cover internal as well as international conflicts and insisting on effective verification measures to ensure compliance. I have instructed my officials to create a task force to consider other initiatives that might be taken in the coming months and look forward to sharing ideas with ministers.

Secondly, we must conduct an in-depth review of the UN's economic and social activities.

I think I speak for most members of this Assembly when I express serious concerns regarding what can best be described as the aimlessness of the United Nations system when dealing with economic and social issues. While the debate on the UN's mandate in the area of peace and security is lively and productive, it is vague and directionless when we tackle economic and social problems.

We do not say that everything must be changed — far from it. Certain reforms have already been introduced, including one in particular that we welcome: the decision to make the UNDP [UN Development Program] administrator responsible for system-wide co-ordination. But at a time when large sectors of international economic activity are beyond the control of states, and when the resources devoted to development and international co-operation are subject to all manner of constraints in all of our countries, we must rethink the role and mandate of all our multilateral institutions, including those of Bretton Woods. These questions will be taken up at next year's Group of Seven summit, to be held in Halifax, and should be debated as widely as possible at every level concerned. Canada is ready to proceed with a comprehensive re-evaluation of its multilateral system as it applies to economic and social issues. If necessary, the relevance of certain institutions must be rethought and a real solution must be found to the problem of duplication.

Mr. Secretary-General, we expect great things of the next chapter of your Agenda for Development. We share to a great extent your vision of development, which encompasses all facets of human activity and in particular its social dimensions. Although the full importance of these dimensions has finally been grasped, they are still poorly integrated in our development strategies. The time has come to translate this vision into new operational priorities and to adapt our institutions and structures.

Mr. Secretary-General, do not hesitate to recommend radical reforms if necessary. Together, we can restore the relevance and leadership of the United Nations system. We must adapt it to the new realities of an ever-changing, developing world.

Thirdly, we must strengthen the UN's rapid intervention capability.

The implementation of a number of the proposals advanced by the Secretary-General in his Agenda for Peace has enabled the UN to make great strides in the area of peacekeeping. In the spring, my government took the initiative of inviting the major troop-contributing countries to a meeting in Ottawa to discuss problems associated with political direction, command and control and the training of peacekeeping operations personnel.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce that Canada will soon open a centre for peacekeeping research and training. The centre, to be located on the site of the former military base in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, will be named after Lester B. Pearson, Canadian recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. I invite member states to come join us to share our experiences and fine-tune our future approaches.

The experience of the last few years leads us to believe that we need to explore even more innovative options than those considered to date. Recent peacekeeping missions have shown that the traditional approach no longer applies. As we have seen in Rwanda, rapid deployment of intervention forces is essential.

In light of the situation, the Government of Canada has decided to conduct an in-depth review of the short-, medium- and long-term options available to us to strengthen the UN's rapid response capability in times of crisis. Among these options, we feel that the time has come to study the possibility, over the long term, of creating a permanent UN military force. We will ask the world's leading experts for their input and will inform all member states of the results of the study.

Fourthly, we must improve the functioning of UN decision-making organs.

The Security Council is currently faced with enormous responsibilities. Its decisions are binding on all member states and have a determining impact on millions of people.

It is essential that the Council reflect as accurately as possible the wishes of the entire international community. Accordingly, it is imperative that we review the makeup of the Council. By making the Council more representative of the world as it is today, we can enhance the legitimacy of its actions and facilitate their implementation. Canada will continue to play an active role in the negotiations launched during the last General Assembly with a view to concluding an agreement as soon as possible.

However, an expanded Council must not be seen as a panacea. As we have said on a number of occasions, the Council must make its work methods more transparent and become more receptive to the viewpoints and special concerns of non-member states. More specifically, Canada has called for a closer dialogue between the Council and troop-contributing countries. The informal practices that have been developed in recent years are a good start, but we must look for practical ways to institutionalize them. We ask the members of the Council to keep an open mind in this regard.

Fifthly, we must put the UN on a sound financial footing.

It goes without saying that the UN can fulfil the mandates we have given it only insofar as its member states fulfil their financial obligations and contribute generously to its voluntary funds.

The amounts in question are no doubt modest when compared with monies invested elsewhere, but nevertheless represent a significant burden that is growing larger at a time when many of our countries, Canada most definitely included, are undergoing a difficult period of budgetary adjustment.

Our taxpayers do not question the need to contribute to the UN, but quite rightly expect that their contributions will be spent judiciously.

That is why the need for sound management of the system's resources takes on such importance in our eyes. The recent creation of the position of inspector general should help tighten controls and improve administrative practices. There is also a need to review budgetary procedures in order to make them more transparent and to simplify those dealing with peacekeeping operations.

Reviewing the scale of assessments is always a perilous undertaking, but the need to do so has become urgent. The current system has serious distortions and no longer adequately

reflects our member states' ability to pay. We hope that the current General Assembly will make this issue one of its priorities.

Mr. Chairman, in the final analysis, the future of the United Nations depends on the willingness of its member states to lend it political and practical support. This support depends in turn on the support the organization receives from our citizenries. It is not only our credibility that is on the line but, more important, that of the UN.

Governments must work together and hand in hand with the private and non-governmental sectors to spell out together our vision of the UN in the next century. This is in part why the Canadian government has provided support to the Canadian Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the UN.

Our committee, which brings together leaders from all sectors, has prepared a remarkable activity program to commemorate this anniversary country-wide. The emphasis is being placed on youth education and on the main themes on the UN agenda.

All eyes will be turned toward this Assembly at the same time next year. Let us make this anniversary the beginning of a new era for the United Nations.

Thank you.