

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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CANADA AS A MEMBER OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs,
the Honourable Paul Martin, at the University of
Western Ontario, London, Ontario, February 17, 1967.

...Today I propose to speak in particular of Canada's role as a member of the Security Council. At the last session of the General Assembly, Canada was elected to the Security Council for the third time in 19 years, and will serve during 1967 and 1968.

Election to the Council is based, according to the United Nations Charter, on "the contribution of members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the organization", as well as on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. It is true that the candidates for election to the Council are now chosen on the basis of geographical groupings, but the fact remains that the contribution a country can make to the work of the United Nations is an important factor in each group's choice of candidates. For example, it is not without significance that the other candidates elected with Canada this year were India, Brazil, Denmark and Ethiopia -- all nations which have played an important part in the activities of the United Nations.

The Security Council has not always lived up to the high hopes which were placed in it at San Francisco 22 years ago. As you know, some degree of co-operation between the great powers is essential if the Council is to carry out its Charter function of primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. But for many years the suspicions and animosities which clouded relations between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. reduced the Council to virtual paralysis. In its early years, for example, the Council used to hold more than 100 meetings annually. In the decade of the Fifties, it never held more than 50 meetings annually, and in 1959, when Canada was last on the Council, it held only five meetings. Since 1960, it has shown more vigour. It has been especially successful in limiting and then stopping the outbreaks of violence in Kashmir and Cyprus.

What are the issues which are likely to come before the Council in the months ahead? The trouble spots are obvious. The situation in the Middle East, the situation in Rhodesia, the situation in Southeast Asia, the question of South Africa's racial policies, the continuing dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the unresolved problem of the relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots -- these are the kinds of situation or dispute that immediately come to mind.

Last year the Council spent 40 per cent of its time on the question of Israel's relations with Syria and Jordan, and a quarter of its time on the situation in Rhodesia. The year before it spent much of its time dealing with the situation in Kashmir and the situation in the Dominican Republic, but was not required to consider the situation in the Middle East at all. So, to some extent, the Council is a prisoner of events.

Over 60 items remain on the Security Council's agenda, and all are potentially relevant to the maintenance of international peace and security, even though many of them are dormant. To take the most obvious example, the situation in Vietnam remains on the Security Council's agenda although it has not been discussed for over a year because there is no basis for agreement within the Council as to what the United Nations can or should do to bring peace to that unhappy country.

While it is true, therefore, that the Council usually reacts to rather than shapes events, it is equally true that constructive use of the Council depends on the seriousness with which governments regard their obligations under the Charter. It is no service to international peace to treat the United Nations as a substitute for the task of direct negotiation, or to use its machinery for the purpose of publicizing charges which it is impossible to verify. Indeed, I would urge that, before a subject is given consideration by the Security Council, the Council should satisfy itself that the question is one which does in fact endanger international peace, and that the parties concerned have themselves examined all peaceful means for the settlement of the dispute before placing it on the agenda.

Whatever the subject under discussion, however, Canada will take a position which is consistent with our record of strong support for the principles of the United Nations Charter and for the strengthening of the organization.

We shall act independently and according to our best judgment -- keeping in mind, of course, our special relations with our allies on the Council, our Commonwealth ties and our interest as a nation which looks both across the Atlantic and across the Pacific oceans. We shall have in mind our responsibilities as members of the International Control Commissions in the states of Indochina and as participants in the United Nations Emergency Force in the Middle East and in the United Nations Force in Cyprus. These responsibilities will shape our attitudes but certainly not limit our determination to participate actively in the search for solutions to the disputes concerned.

We shall be conscious also of the importance of finding common ground between the permanent members of the Council without sacrifice of principle. It is true now -- as it was in 1945 -- that the ability of the permanent members of the Council to work together is an important condition for the maintenance of peace. In the intervening years, the smaller powers have performed many of the arbitration, conciliation and peace-keeping functions which it was thought in the beginning would be the primary responsibility of the permanent members. Yet they have only been able to do this in so far as some consensus, tacit or otherwise, has been in existence between the

permanent members. The main exception to this rule was the United Nations intervention in Korea, but I do not think we should look upon that episode as a significant precedent for the future.

Of course, we must expect that there will continue to be situations which involve fundamental differences of opinion, or of interest, between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. and in these situations there cannot be any doubt as to where Canada will stand. Nevertheless, it will be our purpose to work with the other non-permanent members of the Council to find ways and means of permitting the United Nations to function effectively, and therefore to emphasize its capacity to act as a third party and impartial presence.

We shall also be concerned during our term on the Council to see if we can improve the procedures for organizing peace-keeping operations. Since we last served on the Council in 1959, Canada has participated in United Nations Forces in the Congo and in Cyprus, helped to provide air support for observers on the borders of the Yemen and for a Pakistan contingent in West New Guinea, and provided the commander for the Observation Mission sent to the border between India and Pakistan in the fall of 1965. Yet, during all this time, the United Nations has had to act on the basis of inadequate planning machinery and unreliable financing arrangements.

Some say that it would be unwise to press for better arrangements, because these would imply making concessions to the point of view of the Soviet Union that only the Security Council can decide what measures are to be taken for the maintenance of peace. This would ensure a voice and a veto for the Soviet Union in all such cases.

We recognize, of course, that there may be occasions when action by the Council is impossible and when the Assembly may have to recommend appropriate measures. But again we think it would be a mistake to base our policy too much on the experience of the Fifties. United Nations action to restore or maintain peace must carry the active or passive consent of the principal forces and tendencies represented in the Security Council, although not necessarily the support of all of them. Otherwise, as we learned two years ago during the crisis over the application of Article 19, the strain on the organization becomes so great as to threaten its very existence.

Canada has always been in the forefront of those who actively supported the United Nations. Membership on the Security Council at this time is an honour and distinction for Canada, which carries with it grave international responsibilities.

In this year, as we celebrate our centennial, we welcome the responsibilities that go with membership on the Security Council. We are determined to do everything we can, through the Security Council and in other ways open to us, to bring a lasting peace to the world.