

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire
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Affaires
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**SPEAKING NOTES FOR
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
BEFORE THE
WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS**

**MONTREAL, Quebec
September 24, 1991**

Worthy Mayor, Mr. President, honoured guests:

I am very pleased to be here in Montreal this evening on the eve of my inaugural address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Canada has been one of the strongest supporters of the United Nations from its inception, and the City of Montreal and the Province of Quebec have been home to many of the Canadians who have helped forge the links between Canada and the United Nations.

Montreal has been, as well, an excellent host for many international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and I join with the Mayor of Montreal in welcoming the Executive Committee of the World Federation of United Nations Associations this week to study the creation of a World Institute for the United Nations in this great city.

I would also like to recognize the fine work of your President, Maurice Strong, who epitomizes the energy and the dynamism of your Federation and its member associations. Maurice Strong continues the long record of support and service of Canada and Canadians to the United Nations and to the United Nations family.

Canadians have always been at the forefront of the United Nations -- we were one of the original 51 signatories to the UN Charter in San Francisco! And even in its darkest days -- and there were some -- Canada continued to support the ideals of the United Nations and to promote them throughout the world. In fact, Canadians invented the concept of peacekeeping.

Canadians and their unique set of values have played no small part in encouraging the growth and influence of the United Nations. People from around the world regard Canada as a living testimony to the benefits of a society steeped in the principles of social justice, tolerance, equity and respect for diversity. We have taken these principles to other important international organizations as well, such as the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, and the G-7, and they have allowed Canada to present a unique perspective that has ultimately fostered progress and harmony throughout the world. These principles are as important for Canadians at home as they are for the world community abroad.

Today is an important day in Canadian history. I know that as ardent supporters of the United Nations, you also follow closely the major political developments in its member nations. Like many other countries of the world, Canada is currently re-assessing its own internal political structures.

This morning, the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, and the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs in Canada, Joe Clark -- my predecessor as Secretary of State for External

Affairs, and a strong defender of the United Nations, its principles, and its activities -- today announced the details of a major national process that will allow Canadians the opportunity to explore a new framework for living together in this country.

Crucial to this understanding is a statement of the values that unite all Canadians, including the recognition of Canada's language duality and of the fact that Quebec is a distinct society within Canada based on its unique language, culture and system of civil law. Other basic values include the equality between women and men, recognition of diverse cultures and their protection, and the objective of sustainable development.

These values will be entrenched in the Canadian Constitution in the so-called "Canada clause" and the distinctness of Quebec would be recognized here as well as in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But the proposals presented today go far beyond basic principles and values. For example, we will be seeking ways to make government and the administration of government more effective. Canada, as does the rest of the world, faces a situation where elected representatives are expected to do more and more with a continually declining stock of public resources.

We will be seeking ways to eliminate overlaps and inefficiencies, and to introduce a modern logic into the allocation of responsibilities between various levels of government. We will be looking for ways to strengthen the economic union within Canada so that we are better placed to deal with the growing challenges of the international marketplace.

We will also be looking at the responsibilities of fundamental institutions such as our Senate, to ensure that they operate in a manner which ensures true representation of the people in the major decisions that affect their lives. I should point out that this is just the beginning of the process. A special joint committee of the House of Commons and Senate will be travelling across the country to hear Canadian views on what amounts to 28 different initiatives. It is no small task, but it is an important one for all Canadians.

Canada is a country that was founded on co-operation and compromise. It is in this spirit that we enter this new phase of our country's proud history; and it is in this spirit that I fully believe we will emerge from these discussions with a stronger and more unified Canada. And a stronger Canada means a stronger voice in the world community.

This is important as Canada, along with the other members of the United Nations, addresses the fundamental changes taking place in

the world today: significant changes, deep-rooted and complex in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe; some possible movement in the stalemate in the Middle East; recognition of new challenges to our planet, such as threats to the natural environment, the fragile social and economic fabric of many developing countries, and the potentially destabilizing effects of unprecedented movements of people outside their countries of origin.

Fortunately, the international climate for these changes appears to have improved but the challenges themselves remain no less daunting. I believe that our generation has a unique opportunity to improve the structures and instruments at our disposal for achieving order and justice in the world. And central to that new order is the United Nations.

In the past year, the UN has demonstrated a renewed ability to serve the people of the world through collective action against the aggressor nation in the Gulf War and through its other social, economic and humanitarian initiatives. Just this past week, Canada has called upon the Security Council to take action in the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia.

Tomorrow, in my speech to the General Assembly, I will be focusing on a number of key areas, including:

- o an overall strengthening of the United Nations to ensure the rule of law in international relations;
- o the development of a collective political will to achieve genuine and lasting arms reductions;
- o the development of linkages between the process of democratization and the free-market system in individual countries;
- o the liberalization of world trade and the full integration of developing countries into the international economy;
- o the recognition and strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations to protect the environment; and finally and fundamentally,
- o the need to promote and enhance human rights, especially in such areas as gender equality.

This is a long and difficult agenda, but it demonstrates the importance and the relevance that we, in Canada, are attributing to the United Nations and its constituent agencies. It also points to the importance of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. After all, you and your 72 associations

have a direct link with the citizens of your countries. As the United Nations Charter declares:

"We, the peoples of the United Nations ..."

This is more than a semantic subtlety. It means that the United Nations must find ways to represent and be responsive to all the people of the world. Not just member states, not just governments, not just diplomats and bureaucrats, but all the people. And this means looking beyond New York to other centres where opinions are expressed, where ideas are generated.

My friends, walk the streets of Montreal and you will find a truly cosmopolitan city -- a city that rings with the sounds of people discussing the issues that are important to people around the world. This is an important natural resource that goes beyond bricks and mortar. A World Institute, most of all, needs ideas and opinions for inspiration.

You will find that inspiration here in Montreal. Our governments have supported the creation of "la Société du Centre de Conférence International" here in Montreal, to provide the structures and organizations that will support you in your work. But it is the people of Montreal, of Quebec, of Canada, who will provide you with the energy and the spirit to serve the United Nations and the people of the world.

Good luck with your deliberations, and we will be anxiously awaiting your decisions on the future plans for your organization.