



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

CANADA

No. 69/14

## CANADIAN STATEMENT IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

By the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honorable Mitchell Sharp, New York, September 29, 1969..

Madame President:

Twenty-four years ago your delegation to the first General Assembly was one of four from the continent of Africa. Today that number has increased nine-fold. In electing you to preside over the Assembly this year we acknowledge your personal contribution to the United Nations as well as the distinguished service your delegation has provided to us.

I should also like to join with those who have preceded me in this debate in paying tribute to our distinguished President of last year, Mr. Arenales. We remember him as a statesman who served his country and the United Nations faithfully and well.

As the United Nations approaches its twenty-fifth anniversary, it is faced with three imperatives: first, to avoid the scourge of global war and to contain and settle more limited conflicts; second, to speed the way to economic and social justice for the hundreds of millions of people who are now deprived of both; and third, to come to grips with the serious institutional problems facing the organization at this time. This morning I shall have something to say on each of these matters as they appear to the Canadian Government.

Of these imperatives the first two -- the prevention of war and the struggle to raise the standard of living -- are perhaps as old as mankind itself. The third, to strengthen and renew this organization, is new, and is peculiar to this time and this place. I choose, however, to deal with this question first, since Canada believes that the United Nations must fail to reach its goals if it cannot come to grips with its own problems. It is hard indeed to build something of value, something that will stand, if your tools are blunted and ill-designed for the purpose.

In addressing myself to this question, Madame President, I should like it to be absolutely clear that the criticisms I have to make and the remedies I shall suggest come from an active and loyal member of the family of nations represented here. Canada has shown its confidence in this organization by its wholehearted participation in all aspects of the work of the United Nations. We could not conceive of a world in which the United Nations did not have a central and vital role to play.

The institutional problems facing this organization are difficult in themselves. They are compounded by the fact that, because of their intractability, there is something like a tacit conspiracy, in which we have all joined, to pretend they don't exist. The situation might be compared to the cumulative effect of pollution in a lake or the action of the sea on the foundations of Venice; failing vigorous corrective measures, a slow but certain process of destruction is going on all the time. If we do not act, there is a very real danger that the United Nations, instead of fulfilling its high purpose as a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the achievement of the objectives set out in the Charter, will become a sideshow on the international scene, its activities brushed aside as irrelevant.

There are three areas in which remedial action is imperative:

First: The UN (including all its organs and associated agencies) is drowning in a sea of words (to which I am contributing this morning). Talk is of the essence at the United Nations, but to be useful it must be kept within reasonable bounds. As we all know, this is not being done. The number of conferences and meetings, and the paper they produce, have increased to the point that even those members with the largest resources have difficulty in providing competent representation and coping with the flood of paper. As the conference-load increases there has been a corresponding decrease in effectiveness. This has led governments to attach less importance to the United Nations' activities and efforts. The credibility of the UN as a negotiating forum and as an instrument for resolving the world's problems is wasting away. Public confidence in the organization is being weakened and public support is being undermined.

We can and should act to arrest this process by identifying priorities and dealing with them in an effective and businesslike way. We must also find the new techniques needed to deal with the problem of the unwieldy size of UN committees and boards, particularly those responsible for UN action programs in the all-important field of development. Some of these boards are almost as large as the UN itself was not so many years ago, and have proved ill-suited to fulfill the purposes for which they were created.

I urge these measures because I believe they are essential to the future progress of the organization. At the same time, we should acknowledge that such remedial action can only deal with the symptoms rather than the disease itself. Member nations, locked in outdated conceptions of sovereignty and national interest, find debate to be a convenient substitute for action. So long as this attitude persists, the United Nations cannot hope to fulfill the aspirations of its founders.

Second: Even with the benefit of nearly a quarter-century of experience, we don't seem to have learned the lesson that confrontation between nations is no substitute for negotiation. During the past few years there has been mounting evidence that the great powers have recognized the sterility of cold-war policies, but we have yet to see this realization translated into effective action. There is also the practice, which has become so common that it is taken for granted, of forcing the Assembly to vote on resolutions that attempt to translate moral judgments into calls for action which the organization manifestly has not the capacity, or, in some cases, the legal authority, to carry out. Resolutions of this kind only hurt the cause they purport to serve.

Third: The programs and activities carried out by the UN family of organizations have multiplied during the last ten years. During that period, the total of the assessed budgets has more than doubled and, if the present growth-rate were to continue, would reach half a billion dollars by 1974. The absence of effective control of budget expansion has meant that priorities have become blurred. Programs have been carried on long after they have ceased to be relevant to needs. Personnel with inadequate qualifications or capacities have been recruited and kept on rather than weeded out, and as a result the quality of the work of the organization has deteriorated.

The cure for this illness is a period of consolidation of existing activities before striking out in too many new directions. Action of this kind will enable us to take best advantage of the useful advice that will be forthcoming in the report of the Enlarged Committee on Program and Co-ordination and in Sir Robert Jackson's study on the capacity of UN agencies to administer development assistance programs.

I feel that I must express in the strongest terms my conviction that continued failure to deal effectively with these institutional problems has already begun to erode the foundations of the United Nations as a cathedral of hope for the aspirations of mankind. Powerful and wealthy nations may be able to contemplate this process with only a modicum of concern. For most member nations represented here, however, such a prospect is intolerable.

Madame President, you are known to all of us for your personal devotion to the United Nations as well as for being the distinguished representative of a charter member which has contributed much to the organization. What I have just said shows that we share the views, expressed so cogently in your speech, about the future of this institution and what member states must do about it. For these reasons, may I express the hope that in fulfilling your high office as President of this Assembly, you, and the officers elected to assist you, will accept as a challenge to your leadership the urgent need to launch a vigorous program of renewal? The new shoe of restraint and self-discipline will be bound to pinch for a time, but the resources saved can be used for constructive purposes. I am sure I speak for many delegations as well as my own when I pledge to do everything possible to assist you in this task.

I make this appeal today, Madame President, because it offers the only avenue for a renewed United Nations, with a more streamlined and effective structure, where member nations will seek solutions rather than empty propaganda victories, a United Nations that will be more truly representative of the aspirations of mankind. Such a revitalized organization would be better able to come to grips with its great dual task -- to keep the peace and to improve the conditions of life on earth.

To keep the peace. This is the primary purpose of the United Nations.

The supreme challenge is to find something better than the balance of mutual fear and deterrence on which the present uneasy structure of global security rests. The new weapons now in the final stages of development in the Soviet Union and the United States give a new urgency to this task. Unless the world seizes this moment to stop the upward spiral in arms-race technology, we run a very real risk of a breakdown in the equilibrium of deterrence that now provides what security we have.

I should like to say here, Madame President, that Canada regards the strategic arms limitations talks that the U.S.S.R. and the United States have agreed to hold as the most significant development in recent years. We urge both parties to begin at once. If the talks are entered upon in good faith, with goodwill and without delay, they could prove to be a turning-point in world history.

At the last session of the General Assembly, Canada joined most members of the United Nations in welcoming the achievement of a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We were the first nation with nuclear capacity to ratify this treaty. What the treaty contains is important enough, but its promises are at least equally significant. None of the provisions of the NPT is more vital than Article VI, in which all parties to the treaty -- and this applies particularly to the nuclear powers -- agree "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear-arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament".

Should we be discouraged by the slow rate of progress or by the fact that, although some 90 countries signed the non-proliferation treaty, only 17 have deposited the necessary instruments of ratification? I think not. One cannot afford to be discouraged when the survival of mankind itself is at stake. We look forward to this treaty coming into force this year, and we urge its early ratification by all governments that have not yet done so.

One of the most encouraging events in the field of arms control in recent days has been the coming into force of the treaty creating the Latin-American Nuclear-Free Zone, and Canada wishes to express its congratulations to the Latin American countries responsible for this very positive step.

Of all the arms-control issues that have tried the patience of the world in recent years, the most onerous has been the effort to conclude a comprehensive test ban to supplement the 1963 prohibition of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water and in outer space. The endless argument is continuing - over whether "on-site" inspection is necessary in order to verify violations of an agreement to prohibit underground tests or whether national means of seismological

detection are adequate for this purpose. At the last General Assembly, a resolution was adopted calling for the highest priority to be assigned to effective measures to limit the nuclear-arms race and to achieve nuclear disarmament. In the hope that a step forward could be made toward overcoming the verification problem, Canada proposed in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament at Geneva that an international system of seismic-data collection should be explored through enquiries to all member states seeking information about the facilities at their disposal and their willingness to make information freely available to all nations. This proposal will be pursued in this Assembly.

The sea-bed and the deep ocean-floor are the last earthly frontiers. The last General Assembly decided that this new environment beyond the present limits of national jurisdiction must be preserved for peaceful purposes. Canada, as a country with one of the longest coast-lines in the world, has a vital interest in the fulfilment of that decision. Consequently, when the arms-control aspects of this question were considered by the Committee in Geneva, we put forward specific suggestions designed to ensure the protection of the interests of coastal states and smaller countries. We were particularly concerned to safeguard these interests through adequate verification provisions to assure compliance with any arms-control treaty on the sea-bed.

The results of the deliberations of the Standing Committee on the Sea-bed and the Disarmament Committee discussions of this question in Geneva are not all that we had hoped would be achieved. We shall, nevertheless, continue to co-operate actively as a member of the Standing Committee on the Sea-bed and as a member of the Geneva Disarmament Committee in efforts to achieve the two main purposes of the United Nations on these questions -- to develop an effective legal regime for the sea-bed and ocean-floor beyond the limits of national jurisdiction and to ensure the preservation, for peaceful purposes, of the largest possible area of the sea-bed.

I turn now to that other menace to the survival of the human race -- chemical and biological warfare. The Secretary-General's report has told us once again -- if we needed to be told -- the tragic consequence of using these dreadful weapons. At this Assembly we shall be considering proposals to eliminate them.

We recognize the valuable contribution represented by the draft treaty on biological warfare prepared by Britain and tabled in the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament. The Secretary-General's report, together with proposals advanced in Geneva and the draft convention put forward in this Assembly by the Soviet Union, will help to guide and facilitate our deliberations. The procedural resolution Canada sponsored, and which we hope will be included in the report of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, is directed to the same ends.

Let us remember, too, Madame President, that the founders of the United Nations provided in the Charter procedures for the pacific settlement of disputes designed to stop the insane pattern of fighting and bloodshed which disfigures our globe from time to time, and today particularly in Vietnam, the Middle East and Nigeria. It is a sad commentary on the state of the world community that it has no capacity to order the cessation of hostilities, except to the extent that the combatants are influenced by world public opinion. The current tense situation

in the Middle East perhaps illustrates most graphically the nature of our dilemma. The Security Council unanimously adopted in November 1967 a resolution which imposed an equitable balance of obligation on all the parties to the dispute. Its full implementation could have restored peace to the Middle East. Yet today the conflict continues to rage.

We can do more, I am convinced, to improve the machinery to head off disputes before they erupt into open warfare. This is why Canada is urging forward the peacekeeping studies being carried on in the Committee of 33. In a working group of that Committee, a concerted effort has been made during the past year to develop a "model" for the conduct of military observation missions authorized by the Security Council. As a participant in this study, we have been encouraged by what has been accomplished, but at the same time we are disappointed that the possibilities for much greater progress have not been realized. Once the model for an observation mission has been completed, the working group should go on to develop models for other kinds of peacekeeping operations.

These are difficult problems, with political, legal and financial implications. Perhaps, as a representative of a country with a certain experience in peacekeeping operations, I might offer a comment. It is essential that these problems should be given urgent consideration. There are many real risks in dispatching peacekeeping forces in moments of crisis without having worked out the necessary arrangements in advance. (Our experience with peacekeeping forces reinforces that conclusion.) The Committee of 33 have been helpful in drawing attention to the questions that must be answered. They have been less successful in providing the answer. Meanwhile, Canada is continuing, in the face of discouragingly slow political progress in Cyprus, to participate in the peacekeeping operation there, as well as in the United Nations peace -- observation missions in Palestine and Kashmir.

Madame President, there is so much to be done to ease the suffering and misery of the innocent civilians who get caught up in the vortex of war. It was for this reason that Canada joined with Norway at the recent Red Cross Conference in Istanbul in urging the adoption of a declaration of principles on international humanitarian relief to civilian populations in disaster areas. Two other related resolutions, also co-sponsored by Canada, were adopted at the Conference. One of these resolutions established a committee to devise workable rules to supplement existing humanitarian law. The other resolution focused the attention of this new committee on non-international armed conflicts.

The Canadian Government has lent its full support to efforts by the Red Cross to go further than has heretofore proven possible to build a system of legal as well as moral standards of humanitarian behavior. We are extremely gratified at the success achieved at the Red Cross Conference and we pledge to do our utmost to follow up the Conference decisions with specific action.

The second great goal of the United Nations is to bring economic and social justice to the world by providing an opportunity for the developing countries to escape the treadmill of poverty on which so many are trapped. If we can liberate the creative and productive powers of the untold numbers of men and women whose energies are now bound up in the struggle to exist, the future horizons of mankind are immensely enlarged. There are many who say that such a goal is utopian. I say that the words of the United Nations Charter are testimony that for a generation the world's leaders have believed that it is attainable.

Let us be in no doubt about it -- a great deal is being done. Development assistance has reached record levels and developing nations are becoming increasingly skillful at shaping and implementing plans for economic and social advancement. The economic indicators show that the poor nations are making some headway in their struggle to break the shackles of poverty.

What is being done does not yet match the need and some recent trends give cause for serious concern. Although the volume of assistance has grown substantially during the past decade, continued growth is threatened by economic difficulties and, to some extent, by disenchantment in some key developed countries. In recent years, the terms on which assistance is granted have shown a marked tendency to harden. For many developing countries the growing burden of debt service is eating away at foreign-exchange earnings already eroded by falling prices for many of their traditional exports, and by barriers to their access to markets.

It is for this reason that the study being undertaken by the World Bank's Commission on International Development, headed by a former Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. L.B. Pearson, and Sir Robert Jackson's study of the capacity of the development machinery of the United Nations are so important and so timely. Their reports will provide new insights into the strength and weaknesses of past policies and procedures, and their recommendations will provide the basis for more effective international action in the future.

Never before has there been such a concerted assault by mankind on poverty and restricted opportunity. Yet even greater efforts are required to broaden the base of public support throughout the world for the cause of international development in the Second Development Decade.

Setting guide-lines and targets is only a beginning. Success or failure will ultimately depend on the determination of us all, the developed and developing countries and the international institutions, as together we come to grips with specific development projects.

Let me relate these considerations to Canadian policy. It is our declared national objective to improve the lot of the poor and under-privileged through development and trade. The level of the Canadian development-assistance program has increased very substantially in recent years and, despite the application of budgetary restraints to high-priority domestic programs, it will continue to grow.

Moreover, we are making a determined effort to improve the quality of our development assistance and our capacity to administer the larger program that we envisage for the future. Our experience has convinced us that development is hindered as much by a lack of knowledge, or a failure to apply the knowledge already available, as by inadequate resources. At this particular moment in time, the knowledge gap is even more critical than the resource gap. As a contribution to meeting this need, we expect to introduce legislation in the forthcoming session of the Canadian Parliament to provide for the establishment of a Canadian International Development Research Center.

The goal of this Center will be to devise and develop new ways to apply science and technology and the latest techniques of analysis to overcoming the very subtle combinations of political, economic and social factors that hinder the process of development. Although the direction and operation of the Center will be a Canadian responsibility, it is intended to enlist the aid of experts and scholars from all parts of the world.

To keep the peace and to improve the conditions of life on earth -- these are tasks that call for all that is best in us. They will be fulfilled if we can lift our eyes from the narrow concerns of transient political advantage and national self-interest to a broader horizon that encompasses the whole family of man. We are all bound up together. It is together that we must learn to live in peace; it is together that we must apply all our resources to the betterment of the human condition. The United Nations can be the supreme instrument for the achievement of these great tasks. It can also become no more than a monument to man's lost hopes and lost opportunities. It is the member nations that will determine what course this organization will follow, and like you, Madame President, we have faith.

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