

Statement

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT THE FIRST CANADIAN CONFERENCE
ON UN REFORM**

**MONTREAL, Quebec
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Mr. Chairman, first of all, let me take this opportunity to thank you for the excellent work that you have done in organizing this conference in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary Committee of the United Nations Association in Canada.

Distinguished guests and participants, Canada has chosen to mark the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in a spirit of celebration and reflection. Canada is one of the most fervent defenders of this organization and of its strengthening by means of a sweeping reform. The contribution made by the UN in peacekeeping, human rights, the environment, health and other areas rightly deserves our heartfelt gratitude. We also have every reason to be proud of the role played by Canadians, who have earned a reputation as world leaders in several sectors of the UN. Yet we cannot help but observe that the UN, which aroused such optimism not so long ago, has been deeply shaken by the impact of recent conflicts. Does this mean that it should be dismantled? Let us instead demonstrate our ability to learn from history, from the successes and failures that we attribute to the UN (sometimes in unequal proportions) in order to ensure the revitalization of this organization, the only one that is truly universal.

A collective process of examination, calling for the participation of both individuals and governments, should continue far beyond the current year, and it must demonstrate vision and generosity in dealing with the basic issues of peace and security as well as development, which are only two aspects of the same problem. However, realism and candour are also necessary when setting the limits of the commitment that governments are willing and able to make.

The exercise begun on the occasion of the 50th anniversary must lead to decisions as to the course that the UN should chart at this crucial point in history, which is marked by uncertainty but also by the hope of finding lasting solutions to the terrible ills of our time. I am pleased that this hope has given rise to so many initiatives, both in Canada and in other countries. In this regard, I wish to note the important contribution made by the Global Governance Commission, which recently published its report.

I am thus very pleased that this conference is being held, and I hope that the proposals for realistic avenues of reform emerging from the discussions will help us to chart the course of the UN, which we so greatly need as a means of peace, security and development as we approach the 21st century.

Those who followed the opening of the 49th General Assembly of the United Nations in September 1994 will remember that Canada defined five key priorities designed to restore the reliability

and flexibility that the UN needs to respond to the problems of today and tomorrow. Briefly, we proposed:

- strengthening the UN's prevention capability;
- conducting an in-depth review of the UN's economic and social activities;
- strengthening its rapid reaction capability;
- strengthening the operation of decision-making institutions; and
- putting the UN on a sound financial basis.

We are actively pursuing this agenda. Allow me to explore in detail some of these priorities.

STRENGTHENING THE PREVENTION CAPABILITY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Faced with the proliferation of conflicts that have arisen following the end of the Cold War – with origins of unprecedented complexity – the international community has realized that the best and least costly solution lies in a preventive approach. Since security is, more than ever before, a transnational and collective issue, we must deal with the root causes of threats to peace in an integrated, concerted and determined manner. The UN must be a preferred forum for ensuring that, when stability is threatened, the international community can use all of the means at its disposal to prevent a conflict from arising, including a progressive series of diplomatic and military initiatives that are flexibly designed and implemented in a co-ordinated fashion.

I am pleased that the Agenda for Peace has given a genuine impetus to a preventive and proactive approach. For its part, Canada is actively working to build the expanded framework that must be established to respond to changing security requirements, and we are continuing our initiatives within the UN and regional organizations. In both cases, we continue to offer the wide-ranging expertise acquired by Canadians in a number of fields. We are also applying this expertise to the reform process.

Human Rights

For instance, Canada has a long tradition of active involvement within the UN in the area of human rights – a tradition started by John Humphrey, whose memory we honoured a few moments ago. Mr. Humphrey's great personal qualities, his eloquence, his enthusiasm and his vision will continue to guide our efforts. I think that all Canadians are proud of the work done by Mr. Humphrey. Allow me to pay my respects and extend my deepest sympathy to Mr. Humphrey's widow, Mrs. Margaret Kunstler.

We have all become painfully aware of how peace and security are directly related to respect for human rights. More than ever,

the UN needs credible mechanisms to respond to human rights abuses around the world. The appointment of José Ayala-Lasso as High Commissioner for Human Rights is a historic step forward in this regard, and I welcome his presence in our midst today. This week, Prime Minister the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien and I had the opportunity to talk with the High Commissioner and to reiterate Canada's support for him. We mentioned the need to strengthen the key role of the UN's entire human rights system in early warning and prevention of human rights abuses.

Mechanisms for protecting human rights – including the Commission on Human Rights, its special reporters, its working groups, and the committees supervising the application of treaties relating to human rights – regularly produce a wealth of useful analyses and information that can help us to identify the first signs of a possible conflict and to respond accordingly. We must ensure an appropriate link between the work of the High Commissioner and that of the Security Council.

Mr. Ayala-Lasso, I wish to assure you of Canada's unwavering support for your efforts to promote and protect human rights. These efforts are relevant to the activities of the United Nations as a whole, whether they involve peacekeeping, security, preventive diplomacy, humanitarian assistance or development.

Regional Action

When we talk of reforming the United Nations, we must also consider ways and means to strengthen the role of regional organizations in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. For example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] – formerly known as the CSCE – has developed a number of innovative instruments and mechanisms for addressing the root causes of conflicts, building security through military transparency and confidence-building measures, and promoting human rights and democracy in Europe. Canada will continue to work to enhance the OSCE as a regional complement to the UN's global efforts in peace and security.

Canada is also spearheading a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening co-operation with La Francophonie, the Organization of African Unity [OAU], the Commonwealth and others. A few months ago, the Prime Minister told the French Senate that La Francophonie must strengthen its capacity for political intervention and establish a mechanism for preventive diplomacy. At the Francophone Ministers' Conference in Ouagadougou, I proposed that a meeting be organized and held in Canada, in co-operation with the UN and the OAU, to define a prevention process that would be tabled at the upcoming summit in Cotonou.

If we build on the assets of organizations and the political will of governments, success lies within our grasp. Haiti is a good

illustration of the fact that we can promote peace, democracy and justice even in the most troubled lands. Canada is all the more proud of its role in the Haitian crisis because it unremittingly favoured multilateralism and particularly the involvement of the United Nations in resolving the crisis. On March 31, 1995, the United Nations mission in Haiti, with 6,900 police officers and troops, will officially take over from the multilateral force sent by the Government of the United States. The 100 Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers and the 500 members of the Canadian Armed Forces will play a key role in this truly multinational effort to establish the rule of law in Haiti.

Arms Control

As I said when I spoke to the UN General Assembly in September, any strategy for preventing armed conflict should involve tangible disarmament objectives. The UN is an important global institution for addressing these issues.

The most urgent arms control issue we face today is the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]. The NPT is the most important non-proliferation achievement of the last 50 years. Its results are undeniable and the benefits must not be lost. Canada is therefore working very hard to achieve the indefinite extension of the NPT at the Review and Extension Conference next month. Anything less would undermine the treaty's achievements, resulting in greater regional and global instability.

I should emphasize that Canada is also active in other fora to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to promote nuclear disarmament. These include negotiations towards a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and efforts to begin talks on a Cut-off Convention to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. I am pleased to announce today that at the meeting of the Disarmament Conference yesterday in Geneva, agreement was reached to initiate negotiations on the Cut-off Convention on the basis of proposals made by the Canadian Chairman, Ambassador Shannon.

While controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is important, it is conventional weapons that kill and maim innocent civilians every day. One of the most difficult problems we face is the abuse of land mines. Canada wants to see the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (which now regulates the international use of land mines) expanded to include civil wars, where the majority of deaths and injuries are caused, and a strong verification mechanism.

As we said in our new Foreign Policy Statement, the Government is concerned by the continued imbalance in much of the developing world between military expenditures and spending on human development. I think we should look closer at this issue.

CONDUCTING AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF THE UN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Let me turn to the Agenda for Development presented by the Secretary-General. Progress on this is essential to overcome the perception of aimlessness and drift on economic matters, of which I spoke to the General Assembly. UN success in the fields of peace and security, human rights, the environment and humanitarian action would otherwise be jeopardized.

We look to the Agenda for Development to do three things. First, it must set out a fresh and human-centred vision of development — one that captures the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, environmental soundness, social priority, and good political and economic governance. The recent World Summit on Social Development is the fourth of five UN Conferences to have focussed the attention of the international community on specific, critical aspects of the Agenda for Development. In Copenhagen, a framework to enhance the relationship between the social and economic agendas of all nations was adopted. While it can not be expected to resolve all issues relating to poverty, unemployment and social integration, it was an important first step. Canada will continue to work with the international community to implement commitments made in the Declaration and Programme of Action.

Second, the Agenda should define the role of the United Nations in the development field and methods for effective co-operation with other organizations, such as the International Financial Institutions [IFIs].

The review of International Financial Institutions is of particular interest to the Prime Minister, and as such, will constitute one of the major themes of discussions at the G-7 [Group of Seven] Summit in Halifax.

Third, the Agenda for Development should accelerate reform aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness of the UN institutions operating in the economic and social fields, and increasing co-operation among them. In the proper fora, Canada and other countries should be ready to review mandates where necessary to ensure relevance, and duplication and overlap must be eliminated. Policy coherence and co-ordination within the UN system should be improved through a more effective ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] that discharges, for the first time, its Charter responsibilities for these functions; the autonomy of specialized agencies should not inhibit system-wide approaches to shared objectives.

The first meeting of the Working Group set up by the General Assembly to build on the reports of the Secretary-General took

place in February. The start has been unfortunately slow. The stakes for the UN are high, however, and I remain hopeful that this opportunity for renewal will be seized.

STRENGTHENING THE UN'S RAPID REACTION CAPABILITY

At the 49th General Assembly, I announced the Canadian Study on a UN Rapid Reaction Capability. The study was motivated by Canada's concern that the UN lacked not only political will on occasion, but also the actual capability to respond rapidly to a wide range of humanitarian crises and conflict situations. Rwanda was a conspicuous example but in a conflict-ridden world it was merely illustrative of a more general problem.

The study is looking carefully at what measures, over the short, medium and long terms, are necessary to increase the responsiveness of the UN to emerging crises, to gradually decrease reaction time and to gradually increase effectiveness. This is not only a question of an improved system for predictive analysis and acting on available early warning indicators.

There is a need for a political/military decision-making process that is well informed of the military and technical implications of political decisions. This will require improvements in the current arrangements for full consultations with potential troop contributors.

A closely related issue is that of coherent planning to enable operations to be launched efficiently and in a timely manner once the appropriate political decisions have been taken. The study is therefore examining in some detail the requirements to achieve this capability in the UN Secretariat. This includes questions of strategic airlift and early and effective logistic support.

A crucial element in the whole question of rapid reaction is getting the right people on the scene of a crisis as quickly as possible. The methods and procedures developed over years of conventional peacekeeping are not fully up to this task. The UN needs to be able to deploy a certain minimum-sized contingent to react immediately to an emerging crisis. For the time being, these forces must come directly from member states that hold them at an appropriate degree of readiness. What is perhaps needed, in addition to this, would be a permanent executive or general headquarters, which could conduct continuous basic planning for a wide range of possible contingencies, focussing on operational details. A useful side effect of the existence of such a small body would be the development of common tactical doctrine and associated training standards. This combination of a small permanent planning headquarters and earmarked national units would, in effect, be a UN Vanguard Force, available on very short notice to deploy (perhaps in a preventive way) to the scene of an

emerging crisis. Such an approach could form the basis for the establishment, over the longer term, of a UN Standing Force — an option that this study is also examining in detail.

In addition, we want to consider whether the possibility of setting up regional training and deployment centres might be feasible to further reduce reaction time and to encourage an active role for regional organizations in support of rapid reaction initiatives.

In order to gain the widest possible benefit from existing international expertise, including that of Canadians, an International Consultative Group of 30 well-known authorities from around the world has been formed. This Group, co-chaired by Sir Brian Urquhart and Nobel Laureate, Professor John Polanyi, comprises academics, accomplished diplomats, government officials and military officers from over 15 countries. Early next month we will be hosting an international conference, to include the members of the Group, where we will discuss these ideas further.

We look forward to announcing the conclusion of this study at the 50th General Assembly of the UN this September.

IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF UN BODIES

Straddling Fish Stocks

We must look at ways of making the United Nations and all its institutions more effective. I would make the argument that Canada's concerns over straddling fish stocks are directly related to this point.

At a time when 70 per cent of the world's fisheries resources are overexploited, fully exploited or depleted, the international community must urgently come to grips with the need to exercise some control over far-too-common predatory practices.

You are no doubt aware of the recent confrontation between Canada and the European Union [EU], and more particularly the Spanish fishing fleet, over Greenland halibut, a straddling stock of the Newfoundland Grand Banks. The incidents that accompanied the dispute are to be deplored, but so are the effects of fishing practices that threaten the very existence of the last remaining commercial fish stock of the area.

At a time when we can see the emergence of a wide consensus on the necessity to conserve dwindling resources for the benefit of mankind, we must ensure through the development of international law that proper remedies are available in such circumstances. The United Nations Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, which resumes March 27, must recognize the urgency

of the problem and must provide new rules that will be binding and enforceable. Freedom on the high seas, like freedom everywhere, must be tempered by common sense and regard for the rights of others. Canada will do its part to promote an early and satisfactory outcome, but all participants must be prepared to do their share.

Security Council Reform

I turn now to reform of the Security Council. Canada attaches overriding importance to the UN Charter's provisions regarding peace and security, and accordingly to the work of the Security Council. As our track record since the foundation of the United Nations demonstrates, we have consistently made multilateralism and the UN cornerstones of both our foreign and defence policies. Moreover, through our commitment to peacekeeping and other activities, we have consistently supported the Security Council's central role in the maintenance of world peace and stability. I can assure you that this role will continue, and indeed that we stand ready to enhance our involvement in questions of international peace and security. I have already announced our candidacy for the Security Council for the 1999-2000 term.

Accordingly, for Canada it is important to encourage reform of the Security Council wherever this is possible, in order to make it a more effective and credible Charter instrument. Helpful progress has been made recently. But Canada wants to ensure that the Council's working methods are further improved, that it becomes more transparent, and that its arrangements for dealing with - and financing - peacekeeping operations (including the essential consultations with the troop contributors) are strengthened and regularized.

It must also be recognized that the make-up of the Council does not adequately reflect the world we live in today. We have to take account of the legitimate, and welcome, desire of numerous member states - small as well as middle and large powers in our much expanded community of nations - to assume increased responsibility and obligations in the management of international peace and security.

In this regard, we have heard a number of proposals to increase the permanent membership of the Council. Some have advocated the addition of two specific new permanent members. Canada has considerable sympathy for their aspirations. Others have proposed the addition of five new permanent members but their lists vary. Some have argued that criteria should be developed in order to determine the choice of candidates, others that regional groups should make such decisions for all new seats or for some of them. Many simply oppose the addition of any new permanent members, or have disputed the claims of one or several possible candidates.

And in the background of this debate looms the question of the veto. Some argue that new permanent members should have the same privileges and responsibilities as the existing permanent members. Others oppose the granting of the veto to new permanent members. Still others accept the granting of new vetoes, but only if the general exercise of the veto is curtailed in some fashion.

These are major differences. With regard to the veto, for example, we have certainly been pleased to note that (for the most part) recently it has not been used. That is a positive development and we hope it continues. But is it realistic to think that existing permanent members are going to formally give up their veto soon?

In short, Security Council reform is a daunting task but a necessary one. We cannot give up even if it takes time to effect solid and helpful change. After all, through the Security Council the world needs to find a way to make better use of those countries that over the years have provided leadership, ideas and resources towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all of the organizers of this conference and all its participants. Your work and your attendance in such large numbers demonstrate once again, as if any further proof were needed, that there is a great reserve of goodwill, energy and interest in Canada and in other countries for the United Nations. As we prepare to celebrate the UN's 50th anniversary next year, we must call on this reserve to successfully implement the reforms that must be made.

More than ever, the international community needs a strong, credible international institution that is adequately equipped to meet the challenges that face humanity as we approach the 21st century.

I encourage you to continue your reflection. Rest assured that the Government of Canada, the Prime Minister and I firmly intend to forge ahead. Since its creation, the United Nations has been the cornerstone of our foreign policy. The reform of this institution will remain one of the key objectives of our activities.

Thank you for your invitation and your attention.