

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
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Canada

Mr. President,

Once again the nations of the world meet in full assembly to discuss the state of our world, to report on our actions of the past year and to express the focus for our intentions in the coming years.

Many of us had hoped that this might have been a time for celebration, a time for rejoicing, as the deep freeze of a lengthy Cold War gave way to the soothing warmth of a new era of enlightenment, understanding, caring and purpose. But we have little joy -- and our celebration was far too brief. Whatever insights we may have gained from the cruel and terrible events of the past half century are sorely needed now in a world that breeds new forms of tyranny, hatred and brutality almost on a daily basis.

Many people in this chamber have seen the evidence up close, the bullets, the bodies, and the fear in ordinary men and women. But there is no need to lose hope -- we have the capacity, and we must continue to build for the future. What we need is the collective will.

I believe that it is this institution, this United Nations (UN), this global forum where we must dedicate ourselves to securing the peace and stability that have evaded many generations before us. We must build a new world, individual by individual, nation by nation, but we must remove the double standards that are everywhere.

What good are words in this Chamber, if people at home are unable to speak freely? Why exercise the art of diplomacy here, if it is not supported at home by the science of justice and the skilful application of the rule of law? Can we hope to manage together an always more challenging world when many of our own houses are in disorder?

In true democracies, people constantly strive for improvement.

We, in Canada, at this very moment, are engaged in our own process of rebuilding, rededication and renewal. In four weeks, millions of Canadians will exercise the ultimate democratic right by deciding through their votes whether to accept or reject a proposal for fundamental reform of our constitution.

If accepted, and I have no doubt that it will be, this reform will build on the values and rights that are already a proud part of the Canadian reality. It will strengthen existing guarantees and protection for the rights of minorities, improve the functioning of our already highly regarded democratic institutions, bring greater social and economic justice to our native peoples, and reallocate fundamental roles and responsibilities between levels of governments.

I am confident that a strong majority of Canadians will support this reform because it is based on fundamental values to which every Canadian subscribes:

- unswerving respect for the rights of the individual, supported by the rule of law;
- a strong and deep attachment to democracy, its values and its institutions;
- a passionate commitment to social justice and economic progress for all;
- respect for national and international obligations; and
- a will to resolve differences peacefully through conciliation, compromise and consensus.

As Canadians, we have learned that democracy and freedom can only be maintained by vision and constant vigilance. New ideas for the future must be grounded in the fundamentals that were the original basis for unity. As Prime Minister Brian Mulroney told Canadians: "What Canada's leaders have produced is a series of constitutional reforms that strengthen the bonds that brought us together in 1867. These reforms renew the concepts that are at the core of Confederation. They provide a strong framework, a solid foundation to let us move confidently into the future together."

A strong and united Canada is important for Canadians, but it is also of fundamental importance to the nations of the world. The values that Canadians hold, and have brought to the world throughout our first 125 years as a nation, are also the values that are fundamental to the Charter of this very organization.

It is our belief that we are not in need of better principles in this United Nations -- the drafters of the original Charter have served us well. What we need from this organization and its members is the will to act. We need deeper understanding of the root causes of conflict between nations, so that together we can "... break the chain of violence, defuse the lust for revenge, voice the peoples' needs and affirm the peoples' dignity," as our Prime Minister said in this Assembly on its fortieth anniversary.

I believe that the United Nations has taken up that challenge, and I salute the Secretary-General for his vision and leadership and for his courage in making this organization more relevant in and to our time. His report, "An Agenda for Peace," lights a path to the future.

The Secretary-General also made the important link between peace among nations and peace within nations when he pointed out that "there is an obvious connection between democratic practices -- such as the rule of law and transparency in decision making -- and the achievement of true peace and security in any new and stable political order."

There are within Nation States three fundamental weaknesses that can cause disputes that go beyond their borders. Primary among these is the absence or abuse of fundamental human rights. If people have no rights, they have no hope; if they have no hope, eventually, they will have no fear; if they have no fear, they will seek any means possible to restore their rights, even to die in the trying. It is a pattern for instability, a pattern for failure, one that has happened all too often in the past.

The UN must lead in the field of human rights. In El Salvador, Cambodia, Croatia, Bosnia, Somalia, efforts to protect human rights are of fundamental importance in attempts to bring peace to these troubled lands. Canada is currently serving in all of these places.

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights offers a unique opportunity for all members of the United Nations to work in a constructive and co-operative spirit to strengthen the foundation of universal respect for human rights.

Particularly insidious among the forms of human rights abuse is systemic discrimination whether based on gender, race or ethnic origin.

Violence against women remains one of the most serious manifestations of human rights abuse. Canada initiated and strongly supports the current work in the UN toward a universal declaration on violence against women.

In another context, to eliminate employment discrimination, we must also ensure the election and appointment of more women to senior positions in national and international decision-making bodies, including the United Nations. This has been a cornerstone of my Prime Minister's domestic appointments policy.

No group should be marginalized -- all views, all experiences are important.

To this end, Canada is proud to be at the forefront of efforts to prepare for the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People, when the international community will turn its attention as never before to the rights of the world's indigenous peoples. Our recently concluded constitutional negotiations in Canada include major advances for indigenous peoples in our own country, which will end long years of injustice and inequality.

As this special Year begins, we also mark the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons. We must continue to remove barriers to the full participation and integration of persons with disabilities. It is our hope that a consensus for ongoing collaboration can be reached at the Conference in Montreal on October 8 and 9 where my colleague, the Honourable Robert de Cotret, Secretary of State for Canada, will host an International Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Persons with Disabilities.

This past year has seen the resurgence of a particularly vile form of abuse of human rights.

Canada protests, in the strongest terms possible, the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing," whatever its reason, wherever it is being practised. It represents the basest form of inhumanity and abuse of the individual and cannot be tolerated by this world community. In this connection, Canada calls for the drafting of a statute by the International Law Commission to establish an international criminal court. For this purpose, Canada will convene shortly an international meeting of experts to mobilize legal expertise on this matter.

A second major weakness that exists within many Nation States is the absence of a developed system of democratic values and institutions, and this too can ultimately lead to conflict.

One should not be fooled by the outward trappings of democracy. How can peace flourish when a democratically elected leader is placed under house arrest, as in Myanmar, or a democratically elected government is violently overthrown, as in Haiti? A true and lasting democracy requires time and understanding, like a true and lasting friendship, and it requires two-way trust between a nation's peoples and its leaders.

We recognize the enormous challenges facing countries where democracy is in its early stages. We must all promote a climate of trust within these emerging democracies so that new ideas have time to flourish. Canada is doing this through its aid programs and by its participation in the social and economic agencies of this organization.

A third major weakness that exists within Nation States is the inability to make responsible choices in the management of public policy.

Good governance is important because it ensures that adequate attention is paid to social justice, health and education in the provision of government programs and the distribution of government resources. It also promotes equitable economic opportunity through the development of a free-market system. Ultimately, these are the means to defeat poverty.

Canada's own assistance to developing nations is increasingly tied to their efforts to protect basic human rights, to develop democratic values and institutions, and to undertake "good governance" in their policies and programs. We urge other Member Nations and this General Assembly to adopt a similar philosophy and similar practices, if we are to eradicate the seeds of conflict from within Nation States.

These are, of course, resolutions for long-term prevention of conflict. We cannot, however, ignore the current state of the world and that is why the Secretary-General's Report "An Agenda for Peace" is such an important and pivotal document for this General Assembly.

Canada is no stranger to the process of bringing and keeping peace to all the regions of the world. Of the 45,000 peacekeeping forces currently serving under the UN flag, 4,300 or almost ten per cent are Canadian.

No other nation has made a greater commitment to UN peacekeeping as Canada. Canada has served in virtually every UN peacekeeping mission, and Canadians currently serve in such varied missions as El Salvador, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia and the Middle East.

Our experience in these and other missions has taught us that no two missions are the same, and our experience has taught us that "peacekeeping," which is not even mentioned in the UN Charter, is a dynamic concept that must be further refined to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond. Consequently, we are pleased that the Secretary-General consulted so broadly on this matter and that much of our experience and many of our suggestions are reflected in the Final Report.

Preventive Diplomacy and Peacemaking

We commend the Secretary-General's emphasis on preventive diplomacy and peacemaking as the preferred options. We encourage him to continue to use all of the means at his disposal to defuse crises, from fact-finding missions to mediation. We consider it a duty of all Member States to share with the Secretary-General all information that can help him to fulfil this role.

We strongly support the concept of preventive peacekeeping and urge the Security Council to adopt this option, when lives can be saved, confrontation averted or democracy stabilized. In Kosovo, for example, preventive diplomacy by the Security Council and the Secretary-General may well prevent bloodshed and anarchy.

In the area of peacemaking, we agree that the Secretary-General should continue to use mediation and negotiation to facilitate the process of peace, and that the Security Council should avail

itself of the provisions of the Charter, which permit it to recommend appropriate measures for dispute settlement.

We also agree that there is a broader role for the International Court of Justice and that, pursuant to Article 96 of the Charter, the Secretary-General be authorized to take advantage of the advisory competence of the Court.

Peacekeeping

I have already alluded to the 4,300 Canadian men and women currently committed to UN peacekeeping operations.

Canada has for many years maintained a battalion on standby for UN peacekeeping operations. We also have a long-standing policy whereby other Canadian Forces members can and have been called upon for peacekeeping duties. We are prepared to confirm Canadian arrangements through an exchange of letters with the Secretariat as suggested in the Secretary-General's Report. We urge other countries to do the same.

We agree with the need to make available human rights monitors, electoral officials, refugee and humanitarian specialists and police, whatever the situation calls for. We have committed, for example, 45 members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to serve with the UN civilian forces in the former Yugoslavia. Let me add that we believe that countries, which make available such civilian experts to the UN, should have their supplemental costs reimbursed.

Peace Enforcement and Peace Building

Whereas "peacekeeping" has become very much central to United Nations action and philosophy, the concepts of "peace enforcement" and "peace building" are less familiar. We in Canada believe, however, that both will have an increasing role in the future, if the international community is truly dedicated to ending conflict and to enhancing democracy.

Of the two, the use of "enforcement" is the more controversial. Recent events demonstrate that the use of force may be a necessary option, and we urge full consideration of the Secretary-General's views in this regard. For our part, we insist on the right of Member Nations to take part in any decision involving their nationals.

We also believe that further work is required, on an urgent basis, to determine the circumstances under which enforcement activities should be undertaken and the limits of potential enforcement action.

"Peace building," on the other hand, has been undertaken, most notably, in the multidimensional UN activities in Cambodia and El Salvador. These operations are long, difficult and costly. Building lasting peace is critical, despite the obstacles, not only because of the stability and opportunity it brings to the people most directly affected but because, in the long run, it is less difficult, less disruptive, and probably less costly, than continued hostilities.

Canada, while active in both El Salvador and Cambodia, is fully prepared as well to assist the UN to expand and shape its approach to peace building in the future.

Financing

We support the Secretary-General's proposals to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of peacekeeping operations and, most notably, to establish a peacekeeping start-up fund of \$50 million and the other proposals in his Report.

All Member States must pay their dues fully and on time. In May of this year, in the presence of the Secretary-General, Prime Minister Mulroney noted publicly that money is the clearest measure of political will. He went on to say that "... the Secretary-General of the UN, the holder of one of the most important offices in the world, should not be treated as a modern day mendicant, forced to wander around wealthy capitals, imploring the decision-makers to pay their bills so that the UN can do its job. He must be free to devote his entire time and energy to running the UN and solving global problems, rather than passing the hat for peace and security."

UN financing à la carte will, over time, erode its financial base as well as weaken the commitment of Member States to the broad range of UN activities.

Canada is opposed to the recent decision of the Security Council to enlarge the mandate of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) at no cost to the UN, with the cost to be borne by the participating countries. This sets an unfortunate precedent and goes against the UN's principle of collective responsibility.

We also have serious concerns about certain long-standing missions such as the one in Cyprus, where Canadians and others have served for twenty-eight years. In Cyprus, an entire generation has grown up regarding the presence of peacekeepers as the norm. We cannot allow the parties in any dispute to institutionalize permanent peacekeepers so that they are just another aspect of the status quo. This is simply unacceptable. The parties involved must accept their responsibility directly and work with the Secretary-General to find a resolution without further delay.

Co-operation with Regional Organizations

We are interested in the Secretary-General's suggestion for increasing co-operation with regional arrangements and organizations in functions like preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building. I have encouraged the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) to develop some of these mechanisms and Canada, working within the Organization of American States (OAS), remains dedicated to a return to democracy in Haiti.

There is no doubt that regional efforts in preventive diplomacy and peacemaking should be encouraged. I hope that future developments in those institutions will enable them to carry out peacekeeping operations under certain circumstances, but it is the United Nations that has the ultimate authority.

Expanding the circle of peacekeeping and peacemaking organizations may serve to reduce some of the disproportionate burden that, in the past, certain countries such as Canada have willingly assumed. Future needs, however, will require a broadening of participation by Member States.

Non-Proliferation/Disarmament Issues

Member States also have a direct responsibility to reduce the numbers and kinds of weapons available for conflict.

Last year, we took a major step to increase transparency in arms transfers, and to inhibit excessive build-ups of conventional weaponry, with the establishment of the UN Arms Register.

This year, we can take two even more important steps. This General Assembly will launch the preparations for the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995. An indefinite extension is the only option.

France and Russia have declared nuclear testing moratoria: the other nuclear powers -- the United States, the United Kingdom and China -- have no reason not to join them. All nuclear weapons states should observe an immediate moratorium on nuclear testing and summon up the political will and energy to negotiate a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

We are seeing some progress. After many years of difficult negotiations, our negotiators at the Conference on Disarmament have succeeded in producing a Chemical Weapons Convention that, when implemented, will ban all chemical weapons forever. I urge all Member States to join Canada as original signatories when the Convention is opened for signature in Paris next year.

There are other substantive issues that I would have liked to discuss in greater detail before this General Assembly today -- notably the follow-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Canada's Prime Minister urges acceptance of the Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity in a ringing call to action: "As political leaders, our job is to force the pace and stretch out the limits of international co-operation. Nations ... have the human genius to create a world free from deprivation and secure from degradation. What remains is for governments to provide the leadership the world so desperately needs."

The job of this General Assembly is to continue to stretch the limits and to demonstrate that leadership, through the establishment of both a Commission on Sustainable Development and the Conference on the High Seas.

There are as well many issues of process, such as the reform of the UN development system, which require our immediate time and attention. Canada put forward detailed proposals in this regard in July in the Economic and Social Council, and we will continue to take an active role in this matter.

What a large task we have set ourselves!

However, one of the lessons that we have learned in the post-Cold War era is that there is no breathing space, there is no long pause for contemplation and reflection. Decisions must be made on a timely basis, and when those decisions are made, all Member States must vigorously support and abide by them.

Last month, at the London Conference on the former Yugoslavia, I made it clear that Canada is losing patience with much of the posturing that historically masquerades as international diplomacy. I know that others in this Assembly share this frustration. But, as we speak, the body count rises in what is left of Bosnia-Herzegovina, not to mention the thousands of men, women and children facing starvation in Somalia.

The United Nations needs the commitment of its Member States, it needs well-thought-out decisions, and it needs follow-up action. Anything less is failure.

Let us not spend the next four or five years debating the niceties of "this" principle or "that" concept. Let us all get on with the job of building peace and prosperity.

No one should be here, if they are not prepared to work toward those noble objectives, and no one should leave without confirming their commitment to work together for the benefit of all the peoples of the world.