

# *Statement*

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY  
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
TO THE 50TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Government  
of Canada

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**Canada**

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

It is a great honour to represent Canada here today as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations during this General Debate. Canada has always been among the strongest supporters of the UN, in word and in deed.

In 1945, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King was an original signatory of the United Nations Charter. John Humphrey helped write the UN's 1948 *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*. Successive Canadian ambassadors to the United Nations have distinguished themselves in the service of the Organization, as have countless Canadian negotiators in areas ranging from disarmament, to trade, to development. In addition, Lester Pearson won a Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution to the UN's success in establishing the first peacekeeping operation in 1956.

All of these Canadians had a unifying purpose: to promote progress in implementing the UN's Charter, which enshrines the commitment of the people of the United Nations to the advancement of humanity.

Of course, there have been criticisms of the Organization: many are legitimate and require attention. It is clear, however, that the international community remains committed to the goals of the Charter and to the United Nations as the primary instrument for global problem solving.

The UN deserves our continued support. If we examine the record of just the last few years, the UN has conducted successful peacekeeping operations in Cambodia, Mozambique and Haiti. Thanks to the UN, in this decade alone, five million children will grow up normally, children who would otherwise have been paralyzed by polio. In 1995, the UN is working to ensure a better life for the almost 23 million refugees in the world today.

Global resolve to support the UN, and to advance the interests of the international community, has been recently underscored by such successes as the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT]. At the Halifax Summit in June, chaired by our Prime Minister, the P-8 [Political Eight] leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to the UN system of international institutions and added their ideas for revitalizing it.

The central message is clear - we must take this momentous opportunity to confirm and renew our commitment to the United Nations.

To do so, we require a renewed vision for the next 50 years. This vision must be centred on not just striving for, but achieving human security based on the freedom of people everywhere to live in peace, without fear, to be prosperous, and

to enjoy equality, justice before the law and knowledge. The members of the United Nations must work together now to renew the Organization, its agencies and programs, and to help make this vision a reality.

Mr. President, in Canada's view, pursuing this vision requires a focus on three interlinked objectives: preventing conflict, responding quickly when conflict occurs, and supporting peacebuilding efforts on an ongoing basis. I will address each objective in turn.

The first priority must be to help the UN better protect people from conflict. The UN has had important successes in the last few years, but there have also been setbacks. If the UN is to adapt to a changing world, if confidence is to be restored in the organization, we must learn from the failures of Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, and build on the successes of Cambodia, Namibia and El Salvador.

Mr. President, preventive action, as the Secretary General has laid out so well in *Agenda for Peace*, takes many forms, from economic development programs, to mediation, to the preventive deployment of personnel (as in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), from the investigation of human rights violations to the conclusion of agreements limiting the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Prevention saves lives, forestalls untold human suffering and makes best use of limited resources.

Last year at this podium, I announced that Canada was providing a list of Canadian experts available to the UN for preventive diplomacy missions. We are also taking advantage of our membership in La Francophonie, in the Commonwealth and in regional organizations, such as the OAS [Organization of American States] and the OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe], to work towards enhancing the ability of these organizations to prevent conflicts. Our Prime Minister is currently pressing for an expanded Commonwealth role in democratization and good governance, two key elements of conflict prevention. I recently convened a meeting of La Francophonie, to generate recommendations for it to strengthen its role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. These recommendations will be presented to the leaders gathered at the Francophone Summit in Cotonou, Benin, in December of this year.

Prevention also means deterring crimes against humanity. Canada strongly supports the early establishment of an international criminal court, which will deter such crimes in the future and punish them should they occur. The recently approved *Platform for Action* at the UN's Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, China, lends further impetus in this area.

Our recent experiences in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda emphasize the link between security and human rights. The UN's many human rights mechanisms produce a wealth of information that could help identify and understand potential areas of conflict. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has a role to play in enhancing the early warning functions of the UN. The experience of the Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda revealed the need for the more effective co-ordination of UN field missions. Canada has commissioned work on the human rights components of field operations and on standby arrangements for them. This work will yield recommendations on ways to integrate human rights in UN field operations, consistent with the approach outlined in the *Agenda for Peace*.

A coherent approach to the prevention and management of complex emergencies is a major concern of Canadian foreign policy, and one of the best ways to renew commitment to the UN. Averting crisis requires more flexibility and speed in decision making and in implementation. In this regard, Canada supports the proposal for a conference on security, stability and development in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. We also reaffirm our strong support for the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Another major focus of Canada's preventive action is arms control and disarmament, especially concerning nuclear weapons. The historic decision to indefinitely extend the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] provides a foundation for further important gains on nuclear disarmament. We must now complete the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations as early as possible in 1996, to permit its signature at the General Assembly next September. An agreement to begin negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons is currently held up. We squander such opportunities at our peril. Canada calls on all members of the Conference on Disarmament to proceed urgently with the cut-off negotiations.

Regrettably, Mr. President, our efforts to take preventive action are eroded by the continued global imbalance between spending on armaments and spending on human development. Multilateral institutions should take trends in military and other unproductive spending into consideration. All UN Member States should comply with the UN Conventional Arms Register, which we hope will be expanded soon to include military holdings and national procurement activities. Together, interested countries could develop criteria to identify excessive military expenditures and appropriate international responses. Canada has taken some initiatives in this regard in recent months and we look forward to productive negotiations with many Member States here.

Mr. President, when a UN preventive diplomacy operation stumbles and efforts to prevent conflict fail, Member States all too often

criticize the UN. But, much of the blame for the failures of the Organization lies with the Member States themselves, who do not provide it with the tools needed for success. These tools are never needed more than when crisis erupts.

Last year, I discussed the problems the UN has encountered in mobilizing its peace operations to respond to crises. Canada's long experience with peacekeeping has convinced us that improvements are possible. The international community's slow response to the horrible and deeply distressing events in Rwanda was very much on my mind. It was in this context that I announced that Canada would examine ways to improve the capacity of the UN to react quickly to such events.

Today, I have the honour of presenting to this Assembly, Canada's report, entitled *Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations*, as a special Canadian contribution to the United Nations during its 50th anniversary year. It presents practical proposals to enhance the UN's rapid reaction capability in the field of peace operations. I believe the proposals will both help save lives and conserve scarce resources.

The report expresses the views of the Government of Canada, but considerable care was taken to consult with other governments, non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental institutions. We are also deeply grateful to the many experts who lent us their time and wisdom.

The main proposal of the report is the "Vanguard Concept." This concept would permit the UN to assemble, from Member States, a multi-functional force of up to 5 000 military and civilian personnel and, with the authorization of the Security Council, quickly deploy it under the control of an operational-level headquarters. This operational headquarters would be responsible for the advance preparations that are crucial if rapid reaction is to work. Forces would be provided under enhanced standby arrangements with Member States. Our other proposals seek to enhance training, to create more efficient logistics and transportation, and to strengthen the planning efforts of the entire UN system. None of the report's 26 recommendations require Charter reform.

But the search for immediate, practical solutions must not preclude more visionary possibilities. In this regard, the report looks at longer-term questions, such as advanced technologies in support of the UN's peace operations, the feasibility of a permanent group of civilian police, the idea of a UN Standing Emergency Group, and the question of independent sources of revenue for the UN system.

I believe the report's recommendations, if implemented, will strengthen the UN's capacity for more rapid, effective and

successful peace operations. They will help restore confidence in the ability of the UN to respond to crises.

Mr. President, we are conscious that words are not enough. In the words of a former Military Adviser to the UN, "we can't deploy studies." For Canada, this report is only the first step in translating ideas into action. To meet the growing need for civilian personnel during crises, Canada will offer the UN secondment, or loan, of civilian personnel on a short-term, urgent basis to help in the development of a fully-trained capacity in the areas of human rights, legal advice, humanitarian assistance and other aspects of a rapid civilian response to crisis.

Last week, Canada sent the Secretary General an updated inventory of Canadian personnel and equipment on standby to the UN, including technical information that would be crucial to quick response. We are now prepared to negotiate a more detailed memorandum of understanding with the UN on standby arrangements, which would include more information on readiness and capability standards.

Our report devotes special attention to the creation of an operational-level headquarters as the heart of the Vanguard Concept. Canada is prepared to help in establishing this headquarters, should the UN decide to accept this recommendation. We have already made a significant number of military personnel available to the UN, on secondment or on loan. We are prepared to make available additional personnel, both civilian and military, in order to bring this idea closer towards realization.

The time for moving towards fundamental improvements in the way the UN responds to crisis is now. A number of countries have advanced proposals similar to Canada's, and there are many new and interesting proposals for change coming from the non-governmental sector.

Follow-up is of key importance. We need to marshal our energies, to determine the most promising areas of action, and to move quickly towards putting words into action. Over the coming weeks and months, Canada intends to work closely with like-minded countries from around the world, and with the UN Secretariat, to this end.

Mr. President, the ongoing work of peacebuilding must continue alongside preventive diplomacy and rapid reaction. Indeed, peacebuilding involves a wide range of activities. Much of the work needed for articulating a broad vision of human security has already been done in the series of UN conferences in the economic and social fields, culminating in the Platform for Action, recently adopted at the UN World Conference on Women. It sets out a comprehensive view of sustainable development, which

balances economic and social agendas for the purpose of improving the well-being of society. This global consensus offers an opportunity to restore confidence in the work of the United Nations system in these fields and to dispel the perception of aimlessness and drift. The UN can continue to play an invaluable role in forging global agreements on development goals, in advocating core values, and in responding to development and humanitarian needs.

We must seek to anchor change in a commitment to people-centred sustainable development. A strong emphasis must be placed on poverty reduction and on the integration of the poorest countries into the world economy. No single country, or even group of countries, can achieve global results. We are determined to work with all UN Member States to pursue these goals efficiently and effectively. Let me take this opportunity to set out some ideas on the way to renew commitment to the UN's economic and social work.

First is the need to achieve the right balance between wide-ranging debate and decisions on which programs should be adopted. The justified breadth of debate does not mean that UN programs should be established to address every problem. There are many other actors who play important roles. The UN should focus on what it is uniquely equipped to achieve.

Second is the need for a fresh sense of the real goals of development. The outcomes of the major conferences are at the core, and their distillation and co-ordinated follow-up should be a touch-stone for the UN in the economic and social fields.

The proliferation of programs and bureaucracy must be reversed. Fragmentation, duplication and overlap erode confidence. The roles and functions of organizations and agencies should be examined and refocused to ensure that they are oriented to future needs. The *Agenda for Development* is an important opportunity to initiate the institutional change required.

Improving co-operation with and among specialized agencies is essential to give limited resources some impact. The Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] must take more responsibility for policy co-ordination within the UN system. A start has been made in Geneva this past summer. The recent establishment of UNAIDS is a promising example of what can be achieved. The exercise of leadership by executive heads of agencies and programs is key here, particularly in co-ordinating the follow-up to international conferences and ensuring that duplication, overlap and needless spending is eliminated as much as possible.

We must effectively harness the complementary roles of the UN and of the Bretton Woods institutions. To ensure a smooth transition from emergencies to rehabilitation, improved co-operation in

crises must be an immediate priority. I urge the Secretary General and the leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund [IMF] to propose new arrangements for post-crisis assistance. They might also establish a high-level task force to consider how to strengthen co-operation, both at headquarters and in the field, in areas such as data gathering, analysis and reporting. The World Trade Organization [WTO] should participate in relevant aspects of this work.

Mr. President, we have all come to understand that human security is indivisible from environmental security. Conflict is increasingly occurring because of disagreement over the use of finite natural resources. The UN's role in promoting sustainable development is key in this regard. Canada welcomes the recent success in some areas of international resource management operations, such as the UN Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. Our goal is concrete, globally-sanctioned conservation measures. The same objective applies to our efforts to ensure the sustainable management of forests and of arable land.

The Rio Summit achieved landmark agreements on climate change and biodiversity. Canada welcomes the progress made by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and by the UN Environment Program, in clarifying their respective roles in following up these agreements in concert with Member States.

In speaking about the three elements - preventive action, rapid reaction and peacebuilding - I want to emphasize the need to see these as mutually reinforcing. The UN Member States must be committed to all three in order for any one to be successful.

Mr. President, to ensure a renewal of the UN's vision through these actions, we must also reassert our commitment to assuring the effectiveness of its key bodies. Although I could speak of many UN agencies in this regard, because of its critical role in promoting the vision of the next 50 years, I will limit my remarks to the Security Council.

The Security Council's mandate to help prevent disputes and to resolve conflicts confers upon it unique responsibilities. The binding nature of some decisions adds further weight to its deliberations.

In recent years, the Council has experienced a period of intensified activity. It has also experienced setbacks from which we can all learn. One lesson of particular importance is that members of the Security Council, especially the Permanent Five, need to demonstrate firm commitment to the implementation of their decisions.



For Canada, the need for more open, transparent and collegial decision making is crucial. There must be closer consultation with countries contributing personnel and equipment to help implement Council decisions. Here, real progress has been achieved of late, which Canada warmly welcomes. This progress needs to be institutionalized.

The credibility and effectiveness of the Council in promoting international peace and security is also key. Although we do not regard expansion of its membership as a panacea, it is clear that composition plays a role in fostering credibility and effectiveness: the Council is no longer as representative as it once was. Its legitimacy, and perhaps also the quality of its decisions, would be greatly enhanced by more representation from those countries that contribute the most to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the broad purposes of the Organization — the key criterion for non-permanent membership enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter.

Perhaps it is time to reflect together on those purposes to which Article 23 refers. They would surely include participation in UN peace operations; commitment to arms control and disarmament; and support for good neighbourly relations, humanitarian assistance, human rights, development co-operation and the promotion of civil society. An understanding among Member States along these lines would help in the selection of non-permanent Council members, whether on the existing or on a modified basis.

Mr. President, a recurring theme throughout my remarks has been the need for the UN to marshal its scarce resources more effectively. There is simply no other option if we are to restore confidence in this Organization, and in the specialized agencies. As the Secretary General has stressed, the Organization's financial crisis is crippling its effectiveness and its credibility. We cannot allow this to happen.

The answer lies in addressing both expenditures and revenues. Many governments, including Canada's, are facing difficult budgetary decisions. We have had to learn to live with expenditure reductions in real terms while maintaining priority programs. International organizations must respect the same pressures as domestic governments. The UN and its agencies must focus on key objectives and reduce overhead spending in order to protect priority programs. In fact, there are many steps that chief executive officers can take themselves to increase efficiency and to reduce costs without impairing programs, and we should all insist that they do so. Similarly, many agency budgets should be held at present levels wherever possible, if not reduced. Member States must work collectively to this end.

Canada strongly supports the proposal, put forward by the Secretary General, for an Efficiency Task-Force to address these

issues. We are prepared to contribute both expertise and personnel to get it started soon.

While the UN needs to do more to rein in spending and to promote efficiency, its financial crisis would be greatly alleviated if its Member States were to meet their financial obligations in full, on time and without conditions. Canada calls on all Member States to do so. We cannot accept that Member States, some of which rank among the richest countries in the world, fail to meet their financial obligations to this institution. This is even more difficult to accept when we consider that a number of the poorest countries in the world meet their payments in full and on time. Indeed, among the merely 60 Member States that met their regular budget obligations to the UN fully by July 31st of this year, 32 were developing countries. Unfortunately, 71 other Member States had made no payment at all. Almost 100 countries still owe money from previous years, including several members of the Security Council. The majority of Member States appear content to approve programs, appropriations and assessments without honouring the obligations to which they are committed. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

The General Assembly's High Level Working Group considering the UN's financial plight should begin looking at the establishment of incentives to pay. It should also agree on an equitable method of sharing the burden, free of the distortions that characterize the present scale of assessments.

Mr. President, I have sought to pay tribute to this Organization's achievements, and to emphasize that Canada strongly supports the United Nations. We are prepared to contribute concretely and actively to its revitalization and renewal. But confidence will be restored and commitment renewed only through a partnership in which Member States live up to their commitments and focus on key priorities that respond to human-centred goals for sustainable security and development. If we are successful, and I believe we will be, I have no doubt that 50 years from now our successors will be able to praise, without hesitation or qualification, the record of the Organization's first one hundred years.

Thank you, Mr. President.