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Statement by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, to
the 42nd Session of
the General Assembly of
the United Nations

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Mr. President, Honoured Delegates:

A year ago, the atmosphere in this assembly was heavy with a sense of crisis. The financial shortfall of the United Nations, serious in itself, was also a symptom of a deeper worry about the very existence of this Organization.

Canada - and other friends of the United Nations - used this podium to call for reform. I am pleased today to note that substantial reform has begun. That is both a tribute to the men and women who make this organization work, and testimony to the recognition, by most nations, that a strong United Nations is essential to world peace. We are especially impressed with the United Nations resolve to extend reform beyond the institutions in New York, to United Nations Economic and Social institutions throughout the world.

For our part, Canada made a point of paying our 1987 assessment fully and as early as possible. We hope other nations will quickly pay their current and past assessments. Those who call for internal reform have a particular obligation and opportunity to encourage it, once it begins. That good example would increase the pressure upon other powers, whose contributions are consistently delinquent.

During the past year this real internal reform has been matched by solid progress on many of the major issues of concern to the United Nations. Sometimes that progress occurred outside this multilateral organization - as, for example, in the historic breakthrough on an arms agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union, and in the steady pressure against apartheid mounted by the Commonwealth, and in the initiative towards peace launched by the five presidents of Central America. But in many other cases, the world's movement forward was rooted here. Those cases are worth enumerating.

In the ongoing war between Iran and Iraq, Security Council Resolution 598 reflects welcome political will and unanimity in the Security Council, and the Secretary-General is to be commended for his patient, persistent mediation. The Secretary-General's Mission was not as successful as we all had hoped and the speech this morning by the President of Iran can only be characterized as destructive and deeply disappointing. Therefore the Security Council should be reconvened to take the next step. Canada would fully support implementation of the axiomatic second half of Resolution 598, the application of sanctions.

At UNCTAD VII, the consensus statement on trade, debt and commodities may presage a new era of cooperation

between developed and developing countries. UNCTAD VII was an example of an international conference for whose outcome the prognosis was uniformly gloomy. The doubters were wrong. The U.N. scored a major success.

The special session on Africa is beginning to yield concrete results, albeit there is a long, long way yet to go. The international community clearly now recognizes that the majority of African countries are making great efforts to turn their economies around. But the international community must equally recognize that the debt situation for many African countries is desperate, and must be addressed in new and innovative ways or the entire recovery program may collapse. In that context, I welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of the advisory panel on resource flows. We anxiously await its report. As most members of this assembly know, Canada is so concerned about this issue that at the Francophone Summit we announced the cancellation of Official Development Assistance debt for several countries in francophone Africa. Next month, we will do the same at the Commonwealth Conference for anglophone Africa.

The Brundtland Commission has produced a blunt and clear report on the urgency of protecting our resources and environment. In that spirit, in Montreal last week, nations signed an ozone treaty, controlling the emissions of chlorofluoro-carbons. Dr. Mostafa Tolba, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program, called it "the first truly global treaty that offers protection to every single human being on the planet". Our government believes that Montreal treaty will serve as a model for future international agreements on the environment.

The Conference on Disarmament and Development just concluded, yielded a remarkable consensus document, holding disarmament and development as essential to national security. It graphically demonstrated the capacity of this organization to find agreement in the most complex fields.

The World Health Organization is recognized as a crucial resource for gathering the statistics and planning necessary as countries struggle to master the world-wide AIDS epidemic.

Within its own doors, the United Nations has made social strides in another field - the equality rights of women. In forty-one years there had not been even one woman permanently appointed as an Under-Secretary-General. Now there are three, and we take particular satisfaction that the first woman appointed is an outstanding Canadian, Madame Therese Paquet-Sevigny, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information.

There have been other accomplishments in this past year - the successful Vienna Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking; the coming into force of the Convention Against Torture; the International Maritime Organization Draft Convention on Maritime Security and the progress on verification at the UN Disarmament Commission with which Canada is proud to be associated. They are proof of the worth and vitality of this United Nations, and clear evidence of the benefits to be derived by continuing to confront the world's problems together.

The great purpose of the United Nations is to extend the reach of peace and justice in the world. Sometimes, as in the war between Iran and Iraq, its role becomes most acute when all other efforts have failed. In other cases, it can encourage regional initiatives that may lead to peace where peace is threatened or, focus international attention upon injustice that must end. I want to speak today of one initiative we must encourage, and on injustice we must end.

The initiative is in Central America, where the presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, have joined together in a genuine effort by all parties to settle their differences peacefully. The surprisingly positive outcome of the Guatemala Summit was the result of many factors. They include the foundations laid by Contadora and the Contadora Support Groups; the preparatory work of the Central American countries; and the concessions made at the Summit by each of the five presidents. That achievement was applauded by us all. But it was only the first of many steps along a difficult road.

Canadian aid to the region has been steadily increasing, as has our funding and acceptance of refugees. We have expressed our view that the root problem in Central America is poverty, not ideology; that the real need is development assistance, not military activity; and that intervention by outside powers will only aggravate the tensions. We have supported the Contadora process, and have made available to Contadora the expertise Canadians have acquired in the techniques of peacekeeping.

Immediately after the Guatemala Summit, two senior officials of our government visited Central America to discuss what more Canada might do. I will be visiting the region later this fall.

Canada supports the initiatives of the Central American presidents. We are prepared to provide our expertise mechanisms which, once peace is possible, can help

it endure. The disputes must be resolved by those actually involved in the conflict, but Canada is prepared to contribute to that process in any direct and practical way open to us.

Mr. President, the injustice which I referred to earlier and which I now want to address is apartheid. Canada's position is clear and on the record. We have acted upon all of the sanctions recommended by the Nassau Conference of the Commonwealth Heads of Government. We have imposed a ban both on new investment in South Africa and re-investment of profits. We have banned the promotion of tourism and ended air links. We have banned the importation of coal, iron and steel. Furthermore we have made it clear that, if other measures fail, we are prepared to end our economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa. We are helping the victims of apartheid, with scholarships, legal aid, and other assistance. We contribute substantially to the development of the Front Line States, both bilaterally, and through the Southern African Development Coordination Conference. We apply our influence, wherever it is effective, to build the pressures against apartheid.

The Prime Minister of Canada met with the leaders of Zimbabwe and Zambia and Botswana in Victoria Falls in February, and I visited Southern Africa six weeks ago, a visit which included a meeting in Pretoria with the South African Foreign Minister. Oliver Tambo visited Ottawa a month ago and met with our Prime Minister and other Canadian leaders. In early September it was our honour to host the second Summit of La Francophonie, in Quebec City, and next month, in Vancouver, we host the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth, the international family to which South Africa once belonged.

We are at a critical stage in the campaign to end apartheid. There must be no relenting in that campaign, no pause in the pressure - because a pause might suggest apartheid is acceptable, and it is not. The pressure against apartheid must continue and increase, and the challenge, in the United Nations and elsewhere, is to find peaceful and effective means to build that pressure. It is not enough to ask others to act.

It is Canada's view that the sanctions imposed upon South Africa have been effective. Specifically, in the first six months of 1987, Canada reduced its imports from South Africa by 51%. But the impact is not only economy, it is also psychological. While the government of South Africa has reacted by limiting liberty even more, growing numbers of individual South Africans have reached out for reform, in meetings in Lusaka and Dakar, and in the private contacts we

must multiply.

The instability in Southern Africa is both an ally and a product of apartheid. One of the most wrenching conversations I have had was with Canadian aid workers in Mozambique, who fear that the projects they build to help people will become targets of terrorists, and put at risk the very lives they are working to improve. An essential part of the challenge in Southern Africa is thus to bring more stability to the Front Line States.

Mr. President, before I conclude my remarks, I want to applaud again the new vitality that has been injected into the global arms control and disarmament process through the important announcement that the United States and the Soviet Union have agreed in principle to work towards the dismantling of intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles. Radical reductions in nuclear arms has always been the core of Canadian policy in this area. None of us can ignore that this is the first time a prospective agreement will actually eliminate nuclear weapons,. This is just the initial step in a long and difficult process, but with continued determination and resolve we can hope to move to agreements on strategic weapons, conventional weapons, chemical weapons and a comprehensive test ban.

Mr. President, I began by talking about the atmosphere of crisis which was so pervasive as we met last year. Today, we must all surely take satisfaction from the atmosphere of hope that surrounds us. Hope, because both globally and regionally there is recognition that a peaceful and secure world is of universal benefit and worthy of relentless pursuit. Hope, because the social and economic evils that beset us are being addressed in a meaningful way. And, finally, hope because this Organization of ours, the United Nations, is reasserting its capacity to play the central role it was designed to play, in dealing with the ills that still plague the international community. The U.N. agenda stretches before us: Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Cyprus, peace in the Middle East between Israel and the Arab States, an end to terrorism, and the relentless human struggle to eradicate hunger and injustice. Somehow, Mr. President, it feels as though we are closer this year than last to tackling that agenda.

Thank you, Mr. President.