

Statement

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF
LA SOCIÉTÉ D'ÉTUDES KANTIENNES
DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE**

**OTTAWA, Ontario
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Mr. Hamelin, Mr. Laberge, Mr. Ferrari, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank the Philosophy Department of the University of Ottawa for inviting me to be here today. I also wish to thank the University of Ottawa for organizing this conference on "Kant, Peace and the United Nations," a particularly apt theme in this year of celebrations commemorating the creation of the UN.

It is indeed fitting that this conference devoted to Kant should receive the official sanction of the Canadian Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations. The UN's anniversary offers us an opportunity to salute this visionary, who advanced the idea of world peace founded on international institutions and universal rules and principles.

It would be interesting to know to what extent Kant's essay *On Perpetual Peace* — which marks its 200th anniversary this year — influenced Woodrow Wilson when he proposed the League of Nations in 1918. Did Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill have Kant in mind 25 years later, as they discussed the need for a United Nations Organization?

Today, we know that Kant's ideas were not utopian, even though the UN as we know it does not correspond exactly to the federation of nations Kant had in mind.

However, the philosopher's imperative that international relations be subject to law and morality is the principle which underlies the very existence of the United Nations of our day. Kant's dictum that "politics must kneel before the law" has lost none of its relevance in 200 years.

In this year of the UN's 50th anniversary, I believe we have a duty one and all to reflect upon peace and the United Nations.

In Canada's case, I think this process of reflection should stem from our country's rich history of service to peace and the UN. This is a history of which we can be justly proud. I would like to speak briefly of a few Canadians who have distinguished themselves in the service of peace since the creation of the United Nations.

Canada in the Service of Peace

Peacekeeping operations are unquestionably the element of the UN's work which is most visible and receives the most prominent media coverage. This is ironic in a way, as the Charter of the United Nations makes no mention of peacekeeping.

It was however thanks to the determination and vision of a Canadian, my illustrious predecessor Lester B. Pearson, that the first peacekeeping force was set up in 1956, earning Pearson the Nobel Peace Prize. But while the name Lester Pearson and his

contribution to the UN are known and honoured across Canada, he was not the first Canadian to distinguish himself in the service of peace and the United Nations.

The first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was written by a Canadian, the late John Humphrey. And his contribution to the UN did not end there.

For nearly 20 years, John Humphrey devoted himself to applying and promoting the principles set out in the Declaration of Human Rights, first while working at the United Nations Secretariat and then teaching at McGill University. Indeed, does not the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflect the thought of Kant? Kant tells us in his essay that "the rights of man must be held sacred." Is this not the Declaration's underlying principle?

John Humphrey's work inspired many Canadians and others in their efforts to entrench fundamental human rights. The Platform for Action recently adopted by the UN's World Conference on Women in Beijing bears witness to these efforts, as do the documents that came out of the Cairo Conference on Population and Development and the Copenhagen Conference on Human and Social Development.

The name of a Canadian is closely associated with another United Nations Conference, the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment held in 1972 in response to the threats to the environment which were already evident at that time. Maurice Strong was asked to chair the Conference and subsequently became the first Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program. His talent and dedication did not go unnoticed: 20 years later, the UN asked Maurice Strong to chair the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

The tremendous progress humanity has made over the past 50 years, particularly in the area of human development, is due in large part to the work of UN specialized agencies. I am thinking in particular of the World Health Organization, created in 1948, whose first Director General was Canada's then Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Brock Chisholm.

All these Canadians shared a common objective, a very simple one indeed: to build a better world by putting into practice the Charter of the United Nations, which expresses the desire of the peoples of the world to strive for the advancement of humanity. This same objective drives the many Canadian peacekeepers serving with the UN around the world today.

Canada in the Service of the United Nations

The process of reflection of which I have spoken should not be confined to honouring the work of the past. We must be sensitive to the criticisms being levelled at the UN and we must be

prepared to learn from recent setbacks. Canada proceeds on the principle that the international community is resolved to achieve the goals of the Charter and views the UN as one of the best instruments for addressing the world's problems.

The United Nations' continued relevance was demonstrated recently by the indefinite renewal of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and by the firm commitment to maintaining and revitalizing the UN system of international institutions made by the leaders of the G-7 countries and Russia at the Halifax Summit.

The message emanating from world capitals is clear: we must take advantage of this anniversary to confirm and renew our commitment to the UN. Only from such a renewed commitment can the will to reform emerge.

The vision which is to guide us over the next 50 years should draw inspiration from the opening words of the preamble to the Charter of the United Nations: *we the peoples of the United Nations*. It is for them that the UN exists and it is in their interests that we, the governments, must labour. Our efforts must be directed not only towards ensuring human security but also to grounding this security in the freedom of all peoples to live in peace, free of fear, free of poverty, free of injustice, inequality and ignorance.

Canada firmly believes that the pursuit of this goal rests on three fundamentals: conflict prevention, rapid reaction when a conflict does break out, and ongoing support for peace-building efforts.

If we want the UN to keep pace with a changing world, if we wish to restore confidence in its institutions, we must draw lessons from the failures in Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda, and draw sustenance from the successes in Cambodia, Namibia and El Salvador.

The UN already possesses most of the instruments of preventive diplomacy: economic development programs, mediation offices, investigations into human rights abuses, arms control agreements. At first glance, these instruments appear to have little in common. Taken together, however, they all contribute to conflict prevention. For example, our recent experience in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda highlights the links between security and human rights. The UN's array of instruments for defending human rights generates an abundance of information that could help us identify and understand potential areas of conflict.

It is imperative that the efforts directed towards preventive diplomacy be accompanied by efforts of similar scope on the rapid reaction front. Canada intends to build on its long experience

in peacekeeping to help the UN improve its rapid reaction capabilities. The tragic events in Rwanda have forced us to ask some serious questions. Why is it that for three weeks Canada was the only country maintaining an airlift to Kigali, while the Secretary-General of the United Nations was trying to organize a United Nations mission? Would not a rapid and measured response by the United Nations have saved the lives of thousands of men, women and children?

These questions and many others prompted our country to undertake a study of how the UN's rapid reaction capabilities could be upgraded. Last week, I had the honour of tabling the results of our study in the United Nations General Assembly in New York. We identified three principles that should guide the UN in its efforts to create a genuine rapid reaction force.

First, we believe that proper preparation for a mission is an absolute necessity. We therefore propose that an operational headquarters be created. It would be responsible for preliminary preparations, which are critical to the success of a rapid reaction operation.

Second, the UN should have stand-by forces placed at its disposal by member states, under the terms of prior arrangements made with those states.

Third, we believe it is essential to maintain and indeed upgrade the training of these forces, improve logistics and transport, and to improve planning throughout the UN system.

This multi-purpose force, which would consist of up to 5000 soldiers and civilians from member states, could be deployed rapidly with the authorization of the Security Council. Obviously, once deployed, it would remain under the command of the operational headquarters.

We must restore the international community's confidence in the United Nations and its ability to respond rapidly to crises. I believe these recommendations will help, provided of course that they are acted upon.

Last week, when I was in New York, I had discussions with foreign colleagues who share our concerns. We met to discuss a common approach and I was highly encouraged by the degree of co-operation among us.

However, preventive diplomacy alone is not enough to secure peace. Rapid reaction alone cannot guarantee peace. Peace is a complex ensemble which must be built one element at a time. Its true foundation is human security.

When preparing for the recent G-7 summit in Halifax, Canada had an opportunity to foster discussion on the role of international financial institutions in human development. It is clear that International Monetary Fund and World Bank initiatives and programs must be better co-ordinated and their consequences on people must be more carefully assessed.

The recent series of UN world conferences on economic and social issues has produced a general blueprint for sustainable development based on a balance between economic and social priorities, with the aim of enhancing human well-being. The impetus created by the Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing conferences proves to us that the UN is capable of playing a leading role in forging international agreements on development goals, in defending fundamental values, and in satisfying humanitarian and development needs.

Our priority must be sustainable development based on human needs. There must be a clear emphasis on reducing poverty and integrating the poorest countries into the world economy.

The growing gap between rich and poor on the planet is the greatest known threat to peace. This is an unacceptable situation that must be remedied. There can be no peace while there exists wealth that appears obscene in its juxtaposition with abject poverty. However, no country or even group of countries acting alone can hope to work changes on a global scale. We must undertake a truly universal effort.

I would like to stress that the three components I have mentioned – that is, preventive diplomacy, rapid reaction and peace-building – are mutually reinforcing. For any of them to bear fruit, UN member states must assign equal importance to each.

The United Nations is the keystone of our foreign policy. Its values and ideals are the same as those which have forged our identity as Canadians: values of respect, openness, co-operation and dialogue. I am therefore confident that 50 years hence my successor will be able to cite many other Canadians who will have distinguished themselves in the service of peace and the United Nations.

Thank you.