

Statement

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AS DELIVERED

**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE INAUGURATION OF PLACE FAO**

**QUEBEC CITY, Quebec
October 10, 1995**



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada

Mr. Mayor,
Mr. Pearson,
Mr. Premier,
Mrs. Lapointe,
Mr. Director-General of the FAO.

Allow me to congratulate the authors of this initiative and to pay tribute to the artist and his assistants who have produced an exceptional work that is a credit to Place FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization). I am especially pleased to be taking part in this ceremony held, on the one hand, to inaugurate Place FAO in Quebec City, and on the other, to unveil a plaque in honour of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, one of Canada's great diplomats and prime ministers.

Mr. Mayor, I believe we can take this opportunity to celebrate the important role played by Quebec in the contemporary history of Canada and the world. Quebec is not only the birthplace of the FAO; it also hosted the allied leaders during the Second World War, enabling them to co-ordinate their efforts to liberate Europe and gaining recognition for Canada's importance in the Alliance.

Concerning the FAO, on October 16, 1945, 42 countries met in this city under the chairmanship of Lester B. Pearson to take part in the first conference of this new organization for food and agriculture.

In 1945, the world had just emerged from the worst war in its history. The world's nations were facing the spectre of famine, mass destruction of food reserves, inflation, shortages, the destruction of arable land - in short, the ravages of a world war. Today, with 171 members, the FAO is an international forum without equal. Operating not only in the field of technical assistance, it is also involved in various activities aimed at agricultural development, improving the nutrition of people around the world, and enhancing the security of the world's food supplies.

Since its creation, remarkable progress has been achieved. However, we realize that much remains to be done, and many challenges must be faced. Current events remind us that hunger and malnutrition are still with us. This is why this week and in the coming days, in addition to the FAO ministerial meeting, Quebec City will also host a symposium, which will bring together more than 1000 representatives from governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and academia. Among those present will be representatives from many well-known Canadian and Quebec institutions including Desjardins International Development, McGill, Laval and Montreal universities, and the Fédération des producteurs de bois du Québec. The expertise of these stakeholders in the sustainable development of natural and agricultural resources is recognized and sought after. We believe that hunger is a worldwide problem whose solution requires co-operation at all levels of society and the international community.

Only a genuine partnership that will contribute to the exchange of knowledge will enable us to achieve our objectives of world food equilibrium and sustainable development. It is my hope, Mr. Secretary General, that this conference being held in Canada, in the province of Quebec, will be a success and will help to advance your organization's objectives.

Now, in closing, a few words about Lester B. Pearson. His son has given us a sketch of both his diplomatic and political contributions. Allow me to point out, first, that Mr. Pearson was a visionary who, both in the United Nations and in Canadian politics, brought new life to everything he touched. The creation of the FAO, the first specialized agency of the United Nations, a few days before the creation of the United Nations, was in itself an extraordinary initiative.

Mr. Pearson's second outstanding initiative was the idea of having peacekeeping forces serving the United Nations, military forces who would keep peace in the world rather than fight wars. But perhaps Mr. Pearson's most remarkable accomplishment was his teamwork with Premier Jean Lesage, a colleague who served with him under Prime Minister Louis St Laurent. Mr. Lesage in Quebec and Mr. Pearson in Ottawa did some things that substantially changed the face of Canada and of Quebec. Before Mr. Pearson, Francophones outside Quebec had little influence, while economic life in Quebec was dominated by Anglophones. But under Mr. Pearson, and of course through the initiatives of the Quebec Premier, Francophones began more than ever to control economic affairs in Quebec - even to the point where our present Prime Minister thinks that some have too much power and say too much! But one thing is certain: Prime Minister Pearson, understanding Quebec as he did and allowing Quebec to do things in a distinct manner, enabled the Quebec government and its institutions to develop and to help Quebec's business people really take charge of their economic destiny.

Through his policy of bilingualism throughout Canada, Mr. Pearson made it possible for the million or so Francophones outside Quebec to prosper and to assume an increasingly important role. Today thousands, even tens of thousands of Anglophone students are in French immersion. Considerable progress has indeed been achieved since Mr. Pearson introduced the concepts of co-operative federalism and bilingualism. All that he did was done out of respect for others and out of a keen desire to understand and accept those who did not necessarily share his views. Lester B. Pearson was a prime minister who worked for the whole population, for those who had something to say, whether they agreed with him or not. Mr. Pearson was a great man, and I am very pleased that the Mayor of Quebec has given me an opportunity to participate in this ceremony paying tribute to him.

Thank you.