

Statement

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT A CEREMONY MARKING
THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS,
ORGANIZED BY THE CANADIAN UN/50 COMMITTEE**

**OTTAWA, Ontario
October 24, 1995**



Government
of Canada

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Mr. Speaker of the Senate,
Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons,
Mrs. Fairbairn,
Mr. Dingwall,
Mr. Clermont,
Mr. Roche,
Mr. Oliver,
Distinguished guests:

It is a pleasure for me to be here this afternoon and to represent the Prime Minister at this ceremony. Today we mark an important event: the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations. I regard this as an important occasion not only for the UN but for Canada.

As Mr. Chrétien stressed before the world leaders who gathered in New York to celebrate this event last weekend, during the past 50 years our country and our citizens have played a role of which we can be proud in the service of peace and the United Nations.

I am pleased today to be able to personally salute some of my fellow citizens, and once again thank them. Whether they work in the humanitarian, social, political or environmental sectors, they all contribute to building the UN system. Peace does not depend on efforts in one field exclusively; it is the result of efforts undertaken in all sectors of human activity.

Today, as we contemplate the achievements and turmoil of the past 50 years, one thing is clear. The UN is truly a universal organization, not so much because almost all countries are members of it but because it is involved in all fields of human endeavour.

The range extends from peacekeeping to peace building, education and the war on poverty; from human rights to development, environment, health, help to refugees and programs to promote economic stability and growth; from efforts in democratization to initiatives of technology sharing and improvements in agriculture and food.

Fifty years ago, the first signatories of the UN Charter were gathered together in San Francisco to bring about their vision of hope for humanity.

As the stamp we have just unveiled recalls, it was one of our greatest prime ministers - Mackenzie King - who signed the Charter on behalf of Canada.

Amidst the ruins of a devastated world, our predecessors firmly believed that all of humanity could and had to build itself a better future. They also knew that peace and development must be not just for a few countries but for all the planet and all its peoples.

Canada can be proud of the progress accomplished by the UN to improve the fate of millions around the world.

We can also be proud of our contribution to these efforts. We were, as I stated before, one of the first signatories of the Charter. But it was also a Canadian, the late John Humphrey, who wrote the first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

And it was my predecessor, Lester B. Pearson, who helped usher the UN into adulthood. Among his valuable contributions to the UN, undoubtedly the most visionary were his proposals to help set up the first peacekeeping operation in 1956, during the Suez Crisis. Since then more than 100 000 Canadians have served in over 30 peacekeeping missions around the world - aside from our contribution to the Korean War. Today I want to pay tribute to those who have served and those who have died in the service of peace and of the United Nations.

Canada has worked through the UN to fight for the rights of the poor and the underprivileged, to promote respect for the environment and to push for disarmament. We have consistently been one of the largest suppliers of food aid. We have assisted in election monitoring missions in many parts of the world.

The International Civil Aviation Organization is based in Montreal. The Food and Agriculture Organization was founded in Quebec City and just last week celebrated its anniversary by holding a major conference there. Canada has played a leading role in the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as in many other UN specialized agencies. And last year, Canada put forward a bid to host the permanent Secretariat for Biodiversity in Montreal.

We have served on the Security Council in every decade since the UN was created, and we have recently declared our intention to run for a Security Council seat for the 1999-2000 term.

As we stand here today at the beginning of the next chapter in UN history and on the threshold of the 21st century, I am pleased to state that Canada remains firmly committed to the United Nations and its goals.

Indeed, I had the honour of addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York last month, and on that occasion I outlined what Canada believes should be the UN's main priorities for the years ahead.

We believe the UN should pay particular attention to three main objectives: preventive diplomacy, rapid reaction and peacebuilding. All the components of the UN system must help identify and resolve tensions before they degenerate into conflict. When preventive diplomacy efforts fail, the UN must be able to intervene quickly

and effectively on the ground. In New York I had the honour of tabling Canada's report on how to increase the UN's rapid reaction capability, and we are encouraged by the positive attention given to our recommendations. Alongside these efforts, the UN must continue its ongoing work of peacebuilding, and it must articulate a vision of development centred on the individual – a vision that balances economic and social agendas for the purpose of improving the well-being of society.

Just as the world has undergone many changes since 1945 and has had to adapt to new requirements, modern technology and fiscal restraint, so must the United Nations greet its future with a strategy for renewal to meet the challenges of the next century. Canada will continue to hold out its hand to the UN, to help ensure that the General Assembly, the Security Council, indeed the whole UN family are best able to meet the needs of the future in a co-ordinated, efficient and fiscally responsible manner.

The UN has accomplished great things in its first 50 years. There have, of course, been setbacks. But we can make the UN better.

The UN at 50 should take stock of what it has done, how it has done it and how it can do things better. We must look back and reflect on the spirit that carried the architects of the UN forward. Their vision was bold. Their challenges were great. Today, we are faced with universal problems that threaten the achievements of the last 50 years.

But unlike 50 years ago, we have a proven universal mechanism that can help us meet those challenges.

Let us make it stronger and better. That is the challenge of the next 50 years.

Allow me to conclude my remarks by thanking the Canadian UN/50 Committee for its outstanding work and in particular the able leadership of the Chairman of the UN/50 Committee, Douglas Roche, and the President of the UN Association in Canada, Dr. Michael Oliver. Their efforts – and those of all involved with the UN/50 Committee and the UN Association in Canada – have greatly helped the Government of Canada to inform Canadians across the country of the importance of the UN, not only for us but for all the peoples of the world.

Indeed, it came as no surprise to me to hear that the Canadian UN/50 Committee was one of the most active and successful of its kind in the world.

I am sure that when our successors plan the 100th anniversary of the UN, they will look to the Canadian UN/50 Committee as a model.

Thank you.