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Statement by  
The Right Honourable Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada

To the General Debate of the 65<sup>TH</sup> Session  
of the United Nations General Assembly

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Déclaration du  
très honorable Stephen Harper  
Premier ministre du Canada

au Débat Général de la 65<sup>E</sup> session  
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Canada

Thank you very much.

Messrs Co-Chairs,

Mr Secretary-General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

**(Our Principles)**

It has now been more than 65 years since the nations of the world, exhausted - and in some cases devastated - by years of war, established the United Nations.

Canada was one of those nations.

One of the many in fact, whose fresh experience of conflict had persuaded its people that the possibility of a better world, one in which nations resolved their differences peacefully, was an objective worthy of their every effort.

Today, the Canadian people continue to believe in this purpose and continue to strive to live by the principles that would make it possible.

Such principles are enshrined in the charter of this organization: That same UN Charter endorsed with happiness and hope by a former Canadian government, on that auspicious June day in San Francisco in 1945.

These foundational beliefs recognize the sovereign equality of countries. They remind us of the obligation to settle disputes peacefully. And, they demand we seek justice, and uphold the human rights of all people. These are values that Canadians hold dear.

And, as the universal membership of this body implies, so do peoples the world over. This widespread consensus continues to convince the idealist in all of us that so much more is possible in this world of ours.

At the same time, it makes the gap between aspiration and achievement so disappointing. It calls us onward to do more, as successive Canadian governments have worked diligently to do for almost a lifetime.

These ideals, as well as an acute awareness of the broad concerns of the international community, especially those of the developing countries continue to animate the Government of Canada, the government that I lead today.

And these ideals have the willing, enthusiastic support of the Canadian people. And, I do not foresee any day or any circumstance in which we shall cease in our endeavours.

The question, as always, is how this is to be done.

**(Our Actions)**

Our preference is to take meaningful action.

Action that produces real results.

Action that helps real people in their struggle with oppression, with disaster, and with poverty.

Let me just run through some of those actions.

As a founding member of the UN, and the seventh-largest contributor to its finances, Canada has been a consistently reliable and responsible participant in UN initiatives around the world.

This was so in the earliest days of the UN. It was so during the difficult days of the Cold War, of de-colonization and of the struggle against apartheid.

It is so today.

Canada continues to pay, for instance, a heavy price to fulfill our UN obligation to support the lawful government of Afghanistan.

We pay it in both the resources of Canadian taxpayers, but also with profound sorrow, in the priceless lives of our young men and women who serve there in the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as, sadly, civilians who have also given their sweat and their lives in the service of both our country, and of the people of Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, our military efforts have gone hand-in-hand with our reconstruction and development programs there. In particular, Canada supports those, such as the Dhala dam, which will have enduring economic benefit.

And we have also invested heavily in others which will improve the lives of that country's most vulnerable citizens, and we will continue to do so.

Our international engagement is by no means restricted to Afghanistan. In fact, elsewhere in the world, we have also expanded our efforts.

We pledged to double our aid to Africa, making Canada a leader in the G8 by fulfilling this commitment.

And we are on track to double our overall development assistance by March of next year.

Further, we have untied food aid, and all Canadian aid will be untied by 2013. Such measures significantly extend the purchasing power of Canadian aid funds.

Canada was also among the first last year at l'Aquila, to double support for agricultural development.

And during the economic crisis, we have acted, in concert with G-20 partners, to increase the lending capacity of development organizations like the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank

In particular, we have made a significant contribution to peace and security in Africa, including to peace initiatives, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in the Sudan, since taking office in January 2006.

Canada has also given leadership to building peace in Sierra Leone.

As you all know, we have also engaged very extensively in Haiti, both before and since the terrible earthquake earlier this year.

Canada was among the first nations to provide tangible, appropriate, emergency relief through a wide range of measures. And, it has made a long-term commitment to assisting the people of Haiti in rebuilding their severely damaged country.

Most recently, as Pakistan has been facing devastating floods, Canada has again responded swiftly.

These actions are born from Canadian ideals.

So allow me to say one thing: This Assembly should know that Canada is eligible to serve on the Security Council.

If we are elected, we will be ready to serve.

And, if called upon to serve on the Security Council we shall be informed by these ideals and strive to further them, just as we have striven to implement Security Council resolutions.

I should also mention Canada's role this year as chair of the G8 and host of the most recent meeting of the G20.

We have tried to ensure that these gatherings serve the broader interests of the entire global community.

In preparation for the G20 we conducted wide-ranging outreach sessions, including with the Secretaries General of the Commonwealth, the Francophonie and, of course, this organization.

We used our chairmanship of the G8 to reach out to leaders from Africa and the Americas and to secure an agreement to enact the Muskoka Initiative, for maternal, newborn and child health.

Such progress is literally vital in meeting the most achievable of the UN's Millennium Development Goals: to reduce the appalling mortality among mothers and children in developing countries.

We are mobilizing support from donor nations, as well as private foundations. Together, I anticipate that we will mobilize more than \$10 billion over five years.

This will contribute in a major way to the Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health.

Likewise, we announced here two day ago, that Canadian taxpayers would make an enhanced replenishment of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

We did these things for one simple reason: To alleviate the suffering and indeed, to save the lives of people all over the world, who are among the millions suffering from these grave and debilitating diseases.

Actions such as these are a moral imperative.

It is essential that we strive to make a significant, actual difference in the lives of the world's most disadvantaged people.

Who, seeing his neighbour distressed, will pass by on the other side of the road?

That is why we have also used our chairmanship of the G8 to further the essential ethic of accountability.

We published the first accountability report to ensure that as donor countries, we fulfill the pledges that we make.

Our words must be translated into action and must make a real difference to those who need our help.

And to that end, as many of you also know, Canadian taxpayers have forgiven debts totalling a billion dollars, owed by the world's poorest countries.

## **(Our Aspirations)**

However, let us not limit our horizons by looking just at the least we can do.

Much higher goals are within our capacity, if we will but reach for them.

In the short time that I have with you today, there is one thought above all others that I wish to share with you.

It is the pressing need in the twenty-first century for the all the states of the world to adopt an enlightened view of sovereignty.

As I said earlier, respect for sovereignty is a foundational principle of the United Nations. However, the global recession of the past two years has hopefully taught us a painful lesson.

We have been forcefully reminded that, in this shrinking world, we travel together in one boat, not as solo-voyagers.

And that how we travel together matters.

Because our interests are all interconnected: from climate change to health and pandemic threats and to, of course, the global economy.

For example, nations that do not consider the effects of their economic choices on others, may not only hurt their trading partners, but themselves as well.

Those who succumb to the lure of protectionism, soon find that trading partners denied a market also lack the means to be a customer.

To recognize that is to understand the need for enlightened sovereignty, the idea that what's good for others may well be the best way to pursue one's own interests.

In business, it is called win-win. And it is good for business.

In international affairs, it is good for development and for justice.

And it is in the spirit of the UN Charter.

It is therefore of the highest importance, in a passionate world of competing interests and principles, where every person left to himself does what is right in his own sight - in such a world the need for an enlightened, expansive view of sovereignty is as great now as it ever was.

At the outset of these remarks, I referred to the origins of the UN.

It was founded at the end of the greatest and most destructive war that had ever disturbed the ocean of humanity. That war was certainly attributable in part to an extreme and pernicious nationalism.

But, we should never forget that appeasement and expediency also allowed fascism to gather such strength, that it required the whole and undivided effort of the world's free peoples to subdue it.

The UN's mission has grown over time, but its core job remains the same – through peace and development, to build a better world. To prevent war and conflict, yet at the same time, to uphold what is right and to protect the weak and the poor from those who prey upon them.

The Government of Canada has always been deeply committed to these objectives, and the organization that elevates them.

It remains so today.

And as we attend to our own affairs, in, for example, the protection of our Arctic or the promotion of our trade or the pursuit of our values, we shall be guided by the same advice we prescribe for others.

We will listen to their concerns.

We will speak the truth.

We will act with vigour.

And we will do all these things ever mindful that peace and opportunity for all remain always our ultimate purpose.