

Canada

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
SOUS RÉSERVE DE MODIFICATIONS**

STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE PIERRE PETTIGREW
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
TO
THE SIXTIETH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 21 SEPTEMBER 2005

ALLOCUTION DU
L'HONORABLE PIERRE PETTIGREW
MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
LORS DE LA
SOIXANTIÈME SESSION DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES

NEW YORK, LE 21 SEPTEMBRE 2005

Mr. President, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

The 60th anniversary of the United Nations is at once a source of inspiration, a cause for concern and a call for action.

It is a source of inspiration because 60 years of collective action for peace and development is an anniversary to be celebrated. What a better time than on International Peace Day!

It is a source of concern because the challenges, far from diminishing, have continued to grow and we have not yet forged a consensus on a full range of key reforms. Some important pieces are missing.

It is a call for action because all of us have recognized that the UN remains an indispensable instrument, because need for change is still there. We have no choice; we need to move forward.

But we have come a long way. Two years ago, the UN was in a sorry state indeed; the situation with Iraq had not only divided the membership, but had left deep scars within our institution. That is when the Secretary General appointed the High-Level Panel whose report has truly revolutionized how all of us think about the UN's future.

Jeffrey Sachs and his colleagues have also delivered a remarkable document, *Investing in Development*, development that Canada has done so much to promote ever since the era of Lester Pearson.

In *In Larger Freedom*, the Secretary General made a synthesis of that work with clarity and discernment, and set out an ambitious plan.

We have not adopted all of the recommendations - far from it. We could and should have done better. The Summit is by no means the end of this debate. We have a mandate to continue with our efforts and to make this 60th anniversary year a true year of reform.

We are all aware of the risks of unilateralism or piecemeal multilateralism. But we are not sufficiently aware that humanity's future lies in accepting the inextricable ties between security, development and human rights.

Predicting the future means understanding the past. So it behooves us to look back over the 60 years of our organization.

The UN's contribution to the progress of humanity is undeniable. The UN's successes, more than its failures, show us the path to take to help it rise to current and future challenges.

Lest we forget, in 1945 the entire planet was arising from ruins and states determined that this never happen again. So it is not surprising that the first objective expressed

in the United Nations Charter centred on security, so as *"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind."*

We have known the horrors of war in the past 60 years, but we have avoided descending into the hell of a third world war. How did we accomplish that?

At the UN, the superpowers had no choice. Under the UN's good offices, they concluded major disarmament and arms control agreements.

In sum, the UN's role in ending the stand-off between East and West is one of the greatest successes of the last century.

Sixty years ago, the nations meeting in San Francisco set the second objective, *"to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."*

The UN's founders foresaw that to avoid the conflicts of the past, the world of tomorrow needed to be more human. With that in mind, Canada's John Humphrey worked hard to help draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We have become ever more demanding about the protection of human rights, including women's rights, as well we should be. We are duty-bound to prevent and combat flagrant violations that still plague the world. The Human Rights Commission has played a key role in that respect, but its serious shortcomings eclipse its valuable contributions, necessitating its replacement.

History shows that democracy and human rights go hand in hand. The UN has entrenched human rights through a series of legal instruments that governments concluded under the UN aegis and extended a range of protections, such as conventions on eliminating discrimination against women, on children's rights, and against torture.

The UN remains a key forum for debating human rights failures around the world. And it is in this area that the UN has played a leading role in changing global culture, fostering the acceptance of new standards and setting criteria for judging governments' actions. This is another remarkable success of the UN.

The third objective of the Charter called on members *"to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained."*

For 60 years, the UN has been at the heart of a vast network of bilateral and regional treaties covering almost the whole gamut of international relations.

In so doing, the UN has helped to bring about an infinitely more integrated world, where interactions among peoples take place in a predictable fashion, within a defined regulatory framework.

This global legal framework is the foundation of peace. Where the framework has not yet taken shape, conflicts multiply. The world needs the UN to perfect this tremendous asset.

The fourth objective of the Charter touched at the heart of our debate today on the Millennium Development Goals, calling on members *"to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."* The message at the time was prophetic. The United Nations' founders already foresaw that, beyond the massive destruction of 1939-1945, a fundamental poverty afflicted almost every country and region in the world, which had to be fought unwaveringly.

Today, we salute their hope and their desire to create a better, safer and more prosperous world.

One of the surest ways to create that type of world is the growing participation of women in economic, civil and political life, as well *as* the emergence of a middle class, which justifies hope for real progress on the road to growth. These promising trends need to be accelerated.

The United Nations has played a fundamental role on that front. Its specialized agencies or affiliates have helped set development objectives and have delivered the bulk of international aid.

Thanks to those efforts the world is a better place to live in today.

Today, five years after the Millennium Development Goals were adopted, the UN is where the world's nations recall their common commitment to development, with a keener understanding, since Monterrey, of the obligations we all must bear.

With respect to the four major objectives of the Charter, comparing ideals against reality inevitably brings disappointment. For each major step forward, there have been many failures, in particular the absence of a collective will to adapt our institution to current needs.

Where are we now and what do we need to do to better respond to our hopes?

The starting point is clearly the document approved by heads of state and government last week.

This document is a foundation on which, with a great deal of political will by all members, we can think of renewing the United Nations. In any case, we have a working framework for the years to come.

I am especially pleased that this document includes strong references to development and the values and principles that inspire us.

The Declaration also gives clear, important directions on UN management, transparency and accountability. But we need to go much farther in that direction.

I would like to address some of the points the Declaration raises.

First, the Responsibility to Protect: In recognizing R2P, this body has taken a step beyond utterances of "never again", a step that brings us closer to making genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity things of the past. We now need to implement it.

Second, the Human Rights Council. Canada is disappointed that members did not show greater courage. We have not established the Council; we only have the mandate to work on that this year. We need the Council because it will help us take an in-depth look at situations of concern to us, such as Iran. Canada's position is clear: it must be a permanent body, with members elected by a two-thirds majority, on the basis of specific criteria, and must provide for a system of peer review, starting with the countries that will sit on the Council. I am pleased, however, that the High Commissioner for Human Rights will have a bigger budget.

Third the Peacebuilding Commission. Here again, the work is unfinished. A reference to a sequential relationship between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council could have been a solution to the question of relations between the Commission and existing bodies.

Fourth, health in the world. The United Nations needs to make every effort to protect threatened populations. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria still plague the world to our collective shame. We have a collective responsibility to eliminate these diseases. We can and must do better. We need to prepare against pandemics, including avian flu, on which Canada recently hosted an international meeting of health ministers.

Fifth terrorism. The attacks this summer in London, Egypt and elsewhere make it more necessary than ever for there to be a global convention in the war on terror.

But we must also bear in mind that the whole architecture of global security needs to be strengthened, from light arms to weapons of mass destruction, including the whole range of disarmament and arms control measures. We can certainly take heart with progress underway in the Middle East, Haiti, Sudan, and Afghanistan, regions of high priority to Canada and where UN action is often exemplary. But that success remains fragile and the UN's commitment must continue.

Sixth the environment. If we want to leave future generations with a planet that is a healthy place to live, we need to manage its environment together. In less than two months, Montreal will play host to a climate change conference that must become an important foundation for our common thinking and action on this phenomenon. We can point to progress in implementing the Kyoto Protocol and new possibilities for action in the decades to come.

And now, I will conclude with a few thoughts on what the final document does not say, or at least does not say well:

First disarmament. It is deplorable that a United Nations declaration contains not one paragraph on disarmament and non-proliferation, at a time when we are debating Iran's and North Korea's nuclear programs.

Second, women's rights. It is most regrettable that the declaration could not even reiterate as forcefully the commitments made ten years ago in Beijing or Cairo on women's rights and gender equality, and yet which are at the very heart of the Millennium Development Goals. All member states need to implement the clauses and pass from promises to action.

Third, the International Criminal Court. Canada regrets the absence of any reference in the Declaration to the International Criminal Court as well as the silence on commitments to end impunity. Two years ago, when the Rome Statute came into force, the Secretary General clearly stated that "The time is at last coming when humanity no longer has to bear impotent witness to the worst atrocities, because those tempted to commit such crimes will know that justice awaits them." We urge all states to sign and ratify the Rome Statute. Together, we will break the cycle of impunity and justice will be done for the victims of such crimes.

Mr President,

We are meeting in New York today to help solve humanity's problems. But, while this room is witness to too many unresolved debates and far too much costly inaction, the challenges and problems we discuss are far afield. Over the years we have confronted grave challenges in Sudan, Haiti, Kosovo and Rwanda, and many others. In some cases we can hold our heads high; in others we need to recognize, and learn from, our mistakes and failures. I think we have set the course but we have far more road to travel.