

.....Remarks given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Canada to the United Nations  
North Carolina University and  
Duke University - April, 2002

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**(SLIDE 2 - Picture of UN HQ)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today, to talk about  
international affairs in general and the United Nations in  
particular.

Unlike Americans, we Canadians have the UN in our  
DNA.

We believe in the United Nations, we recognize its failings and inadequacies, but we try hard to make the organization work.

I have a simple message for you today that I believe strongly.

We, all - Canadians, Americans, everybody - are going to need the UN now and are going to need it even more in the future.

We all know that the Internet, television and travel are transforming the ways we live and live together.

And we know that that transformation is just beginning.

We also know that the world's population has been growing enormously.

If over half the world's population has never used a telephone and if 90% of people have never left their own countries, but if living standards are rising world-wide, and they are rising, then it is certain that the scope for further integration is enormous.

At the same time, the vast disparities in “connectedness” and in consequent prosperity if left unattended are a near guarantee of instability.

I also believe we are living through what the political scientists would call a “paradigm shift”.

Increasingly, people are at the heart of international affairs.

Increasingly, the need to protect people - from conflict, from abuse, from disease - is becoming the touchstone of international affairs.

Relations between States remain important, as do the pursuit of national interests but there is an increasingly strong focus on protecting people.

A further factor is our own security.

As we know from September 11, our very modernity is becoming a source of vulnerability.

We also know now more certainly than we did on September 10 that our security depends on engaging the world, not on retreating from it.

For all these reasons, isolation is not an option.

Multilateral cooperation is a sine qua non of a successful foreign policy, for any country.

And the UN is neither dispensable, nor optional.

In fact, if we want to live in a world that is more than an aggregation of gated communities, Canadians believe that the UN is indispensable.

And so do most people everywhere, including in the U.S.

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**(SLIDE 3 - The United Nations System)**

So, if the UN is indispensable, we need to understand it.

What is the UN anyway?

The question is no mere rhetorical flourish, especially at a time when expectations of the UN are so high - on Afghanistan and on terrorism.

Effectively, to paraphrase the old Pogo comic strip character (which perhaps only the professors present are old enough to remember), “the UN is us”.

The UN is not some living thing unto itself.

It is its members, with their weaknesses and strengths, their values and demands, their interests and biases, their human foibles and their national characters.

It is an engagingly human, sometimes maddeningly frustrating but nonetheless uniquely representative organization.

The UN was built on the rubble of the Second World War and in the ruins of the Great Depression - by realists who had survived both.

By people, including people whom NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw has called the greatest generation, whose purposes were:

- “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war:,”
- “to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights.” and
- “to promote social progress...”

for all, to quote the UN Charter.

It was, and remains, a powerful, ennobling and unifying vision.

Where the League of Nations had failed, the UN has succeeded with some help from NATO and nuclear deterrence, to save successive generations, so far, from the scourge of world war.

It has advanced the cause of human rights, unevenly at times, but steadily.

And it has promoted social and economic progress, doing extraordinary work on behalf of women, children, refugees and the repressed and dispossessed.

The UN is at the heart literally and figuratively of the international rules-based system, the centre of a network of treaties and organizations that govern and guide international relations and that serve and protect us all.

The UN's scope covers virtually every aspect of human activity – political, economic, social, military, security, the law, health, the environment, culture – but not, importantly, religion.

Consider these headlines from noon briefings by the UN Spokesman that I have picked at random:

- “UN urges every possible action to save life in Jenin Refugee Camp”
  
- “Jenin Camp looks like earthquake zone, says UN aid worker”
  
- “Annan urges donor support for UNRWA”.
  
- “Top UN Human Rights official says team ready for Middle-East mission”.

- “Venezuela: Annan satisfied with restoration of constitutional order”.
  
- “Annan briefs Council on Ethiopia/Eritrea”.
  
- “Former Afghan King to return home to open Loya Jurga”.
  
- “UNHCR assists return of Gypsies to homes in Kosovo”.
  
- “Rwandan priest pleads not guilty to genocide charges”.
  
- “Polio cases are at lowest point in history”.

- “The Food and Agriculture Organizations warns that several countries in southern Africa are still threatened with a food crisis”.
  
- “The World Food Programme announced that the second annual International Shipping Conference will take place in Rome”.
  
- “this morning, Costa Rica became the 127<sup>th</sup> country to sign the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants”.
  
- “UN announces final results in East Timor election”.

- “Security Council discusses Angola, Bougainville, and Iraq”.
  
- “UN Envoy participates in talks on Madagascar in Dakar”.
  
- “UN, Angolan Government to assess humanitarian conditions”.
  
- “UN Refugee Chief appeals for aid to Afghanistan”.
  
- “More than 60 representatives from the business world, labor and civil society will be meeting, within the framework of the Global Compact”.

- “The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) announced that great progress is being made in the reduction of deaths of newborns and new mothers from tetanus”.
  
- “The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) noted that the third meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety will take place in The Hague next week.”
  
- “The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today a partnership with the Discovery Channel, aimed at generating awareness of endangered languages and cultural heritage.”

To illustrate, when I flew to Raleigh/Durham, my flight was, in one way or another, to some extent or another, affected by the regulations of ICAO, the ILO, the WHO, the FAO, the WIPO, the WMO, the ITU, the IPU and UNEP, to name only the most obvious.

We, happily, take the existence of these organizations and their positive impacts on our lives quite for granted.

Much of its work is decidedly practical and much too mundane to rate a headline.

But they are important to the good order of international life.

**(SLIDE 4 - What the UN is not)**

What the UN is not is as important as what it is.

Most decidedly, it is not a world government.

The Secretary General is not a Head of State.

(It is not an accident that the holder of the office was  
not called President.)

Very often commentators, especially in this region of the USA, attribute powers to the Secretary General that he must only wish he had.

He has no armed forces at his disposal.

He has no tax authority.

He presides over the Secretariat, not over the member states.

His power depends on his personal qualities, on the capacity of the international staff at his disposal and on the latitude member countries give him to act in their collective name.

As for the General Assembly, it is more an arena than a parliament, a forum for discussion and debate, a generator of policy ideas, a locus for norm setting and international law codification.

Implementation of General Assembly decisions by the 189 members is voluntary, although the accumulating corpus of resolutions and decisions shape customary international law over time.

At the same time, it is true that, with 189 members, the Assembly has become unwieldy, consuming too much time, for too little outcome.

It is hamstrung at times by groups, notably the non-aligned movement, whose *raison d'être* ended with the conclusion of the Cold War.

Too often it seems a repository of yesterday's economic ideas and theories and prejudices.

And its deliberations, particularly its budget deliberations, are too often hostage to a handful of spoiler countries.

These are some of factors I had in mind when I said the UN was “sometimes maddeningly frustrating”.

**(SLIDE 5 - Security Council Cartoon)**

The Security Council is not the world's cabinet for international affairs.

Far from it.

But when the Security council exercises its authority in order to maintain international peace and security, its decisions are binding on all UN members.

One such decision is its unprecedented resolution 1373, on terrorism, which I will discuss in detail later.

The UN is also the sum of its global conferences, where public consciousness is raised and political will is mobilized, where new norms are advocated and practices established.

From the first environment conference in Stockholm in 1972, to the Children's Summit in New York in 1990, to the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, to the Millennium Summit in 2000, the UN has engaged governments and civil society and, sometimes dramatically, though more often imperceptibly, has changed the way people, and their governments, think.

**(Slide #6 - An Impressive but Imperfect Record)**

On an occasion in which I am mostly singing the UN's praises, I do wish to acknowledge that there have been many frustrations, setbacks and worse, failures.

There are issues that do not come to the Security Council that ought to – Kashmir is one, despite the fact that two nuclear weapons states are in a potentially catastrophic face-off over competing claims to this territory.

Under “setbacks”, I would put the World Conference on Racism in Durban.

It did great harm to the UN's reputation; it is an experience that should never be repeated.

Much worse were the UN failures, the betrayal of Srebrenica and, the worst of all, the genocide of Rwanda.

These crimes have left indelible marks on the UN's record – and on its soul.

It is no credit to the UN Security Council, particularly its permanent members, that it remained mute when the Secretary-General accepted responsibility on behalf of the Secretariat and that it took a full six years to acknowledge its own failures in Rwanda.

But – at Canada’s prodding – it more or less did finally do so.

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**(SLIDE #7 - Peace and Security)**

2001 was one of the busier peacekeeping years in UN history.

The UN deployed about 47,000 peacekeepers on 15 missions around the world, at a cost of about \$3 billion.

“Peace-keeping” is increasingly a misnomer.

Many of these missions are complex and dangerous ones, such as in Bosnia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, the Congo and Kosovo.

These missions are significant not only in size and risk, but also in scope.

They entail not just simple peace-keeping but peace-enforcing and nation-building of unprecedented complexity and scope.

If the investment in peace is not to be wasted, they require thousands of administrators and civilian police to rebuild effective administration.

**(SLIDE #8 - Human rights / Interational Law)**

The UN is also central to the progressive development of international law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafted by a Canadian, John Humphries of McGill University, and the International Covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights (the so-called International Bill of Rights) are crucial examples.

Together, they have laid the groundwork for more than 80 conventions and treaties on human rights, including on the status of refugees and on the prevention of genocide.

Any state that ratifies the many human rights conventions and treaties that have come of this work is legally bound to respect them.

Implementation of these treaties is nevertheless chequered; but, overall, they are making a positive impact on people's lives.

Recently, the UN has brought international law to bear on those responsible for serious violations of human rights.

**(SLIDE #9 - Milosevic Cartoon)**

For example, the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda have put on trial dozens of individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

And, in the near future, the new Special Court for Sierra Leone, which Canada is helping the UN to establish, will bring individuals to trial responsible for the worst atrocities of the ten-year long civil war in the country.

The International Criminal Court, a major Canadian priority, which is will come into being formally July 1, Canada Day coincidentally, will be the key international legal instrument for addressing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity - and, in the foreseeable future we hope, terrorism.

We expect the International Criminal Court to have a major impact on impunity.

**(SLIDE #10 - Development and Health)**

The UN's role in development is too complex for summary treatment, but some facts are needed to understand it.

It has become almost fashionable to disparage the utility of international development assistance, especially in Africa.

On this point, there is good news and bad news.

It is true that developing countries' share of gross world product almost doubled since 1950.

But it is also true that sub-Saharan Africa's share decreased even while its share of the world's population almost doubled.

That is why Africa and the well-being of Africans is the main preoccupation of the UN.

At the same time, there has been solid progress elsewhere that the UN has helped promote.

For instance, global illiteracy has fallen from 37% of people 15 years old or older in 1970, to 21% in 2000.

Since the 1991 UN Children's Summit, the gross enrolment rate in primary schools has risen from 40% to 78%, for girls from 38% to 68%.

In developing countries, this represents a 50% increase, although the very poorest countries have lagged behind.

On health, one important indicator is the under five child mortality rate which is, globally, less than half of what it was 50 years ago – declining from 217 fatalities per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 87 in 1995.

Every region, including sub-Saharan Africa, has made significant progress.

And inoculation programs have born fruit – more than three-quarters of the world’s children have been vaccinated against the six major, preventable childhood diseases.

Obviously, much remains to be done before we can begin to be satisfied but the picture is nowhere near as bleak as some believe and the UN is at the heart of these development efforts.

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**(SLIDE #11 - The AIDS cartoon)**

There is, however, a darkening shadow over this progress - - HIV-AIDS.

The extent of the HIV-AIDS tragedy is staggering.

Globally, 22 million people have died, 15,000 are being infected daily; 13 million children have been orphaned.

The numbers are mind-numbing.

They must not be conscience-stilling.

It will not be long before more people will have died from AIDS than were killed in World War II, humanity's bloodiest conflict.

In parts of Southern Africa, the infection rate among adults exceeds 25%.

And HIV/AIDS is not just an African problem; in Asia, 6.4 million are estimated to be infected; in the Caribbean and Central America, 1.8 million are living with HIV/AIDS.

In the most seriously affected countries, infrastructure, services and productivity are facing accumulating collapse.

Teachers and doctors are dying.

HIV-AIDS is mocking the progress so many poorer countries have laboured to achieve.

Secretary-General Annan has used his extraordinary skills to push the HIV-AIDS issue up the international agenda.

His efforts to heighten public awareness and to stimulate political will culminated in the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS last June.

The Special Session set ambitious but realistic time-bound targets and goals, in the belief inter alia that prevention and treatment can work in any culture, if the political will exists.

The Secretary General also spearheaded a major fundraising effort; more than \$1.5 billion in funding has already been secured by the UN.

Much more money will be needed; but doing nothing would cost far more than acting.

That is partly why industry, and not only the pharmaceutical industry, is increasingly joining the struggle, as are foundations, such as the Gates Foundation.

HIV/AIDS is a health problem, an economic problem and a security problem.

The UN organization is uniquely equipped to respond.

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**(SLIDE #12 - KOSOVO People - Exit)**

Refugees and internally displaced persons – people who have fled war, persecution or human rights abuse – have also been a preoccupation for the UN.

**(SLIDE #13 - Humanitarian Assistance)**

Since 1999, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has run operations assisting 2.6 million refugees in Afghanistan, 1 million in the former Yugoslavia, and countless more in Africa.

Many people depend utterly on the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) as well as the Red Cross/Crescent and international NGO's.

In Afghanistan, the UN managed to deliver food throughout the Taliban reign and during the campaign against Al Queda.

UNESCO bakeries produced bread in the most dire circumstances.

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**(SLIDE #14 - Environment)**

From the Stockholm Conference in 1972 to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and the Johannesburg Summit this coming Fall, the UN has become the indispensable body for setting international environmental norms as a means of improving people's lives and conserving our natural resources.

These norms cover everything from sustainable forest management to desertification, biodiversity, the marine environment and chemicals persistent organic pollutants.

As an example, within ten years of signing the 1987 Montréal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, all industrialized countries had ceased production and consumption of most ozone-depleting substances.

**(SLIDE #15 - The S.U.V. Cartoon)**

Other examples of UN conventions include, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and subsequently its Kyoto Protocol and treaties on persistent organic pollutants, hazardous waste, on trade in hazardous chemicals and trade in endangered species.

Increasingly, the issue is how environmental protection relates to economic and social development, a concept that we know as Sustainable Development.

This concept that emerged from the 1987 Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development, reconciles the seemingly incompatible ideas of economic growth and environmental protection.

This summer in Johannesburg, the World Summit on Sustainable Development will take stock of what has been achieved, or not achieved, since Rio, and set goals for the subsequent 10 years.

The idea is not only to reinvigorate the international focus on sustainable development, but also to mainstream it, to identify concrete actions to implement the sustainable development agenda.

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**(SLIDE #16 - Millennium Declaration)**

The Millennium Declaration, issued collectively by 75 Heads of State, Heads of Government and Foreign Ministers at the Millennium Summit of 2000, has breathed new life into an organization that was beset by diplomatic sclerosis.

A sweeping statement on the role of the UN and globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century prescribed action for the full spectrum of the UN's activities.

Millennium goals include:

- Peace and security: to reform UN peace-keeping integrally.
  
- Ending poverty: To reduce by 50% the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day by 2015 - from 1990 as the base year.
  
- Ending inequality: To eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2015.
  
- Improving education: to provide children everywhere, boys and girls alike, complete primary schooling by 2015.

- Improving health: to reduce by two thirds the under-5-infant mortality rate by 2015; to reduce the maternal mortality rate by 75%.
  
- Safeguarding the environment: to cut in half by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.

**(SLIDES #17 & # 18 - Kofi and the Nobel Prize picture)**

The Nobel Prize given to Kofi Annan and to “the UN” was both in recognition of all that the UN has done – the 9<sup>th</sup> Nobel Prize for the UN over the years – and an investment.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee presumably understood that the UN can use all the standing it can get.

The UN faces two of the most difficult, perhaps the most difficult, challenges ever – re-building the failed state of Afghanistan and defeating international terrorism.

**(SLIDE #19 - Rebuilding a Failed State)**

In Afghanistan, the UN must succeed in re-building a country that has been at war with itself and others for two generations at least.

It must sustain several million refugees and internally displaced people for many months to come.

It must find the wherewithal – literally billions of dollars - for physical reconstruction of an infrastructure that was already in ruins before the anti-Al Queda bombing even began.

**(SLIDE #20 - Cartoon “Afghanistan”)**

It must find a way to bring into being and to support a government that acknowledges ethnic diversity but does not fuel tribal differences.

It must re-establish the rights of women in an atmosphere that to date has been hostile in the extreme to them.

It must bring stability and security to a country previously most easily united by the prospect of expelling foreigners.

It must also guide and coordinate the myriad of UN agencies, NGO's, national donors and international financial institutions that have so frequently before worked at cross-purposes.

If the UN does not succeed, Afghanistan will remain a failed state and a potential haven for terrorists.

**(SLIDE #21 - The Twin Towers Pictures)**

The second enormous challenge facing the United Nations is the necessity to help suppress the growing scourge of terrorism.

Here, there are limits to what the UN can do.

**(SLIDE #22 - Terrorism - Draining the Swamp)**

What the UN can do, and will do, is lead the legal and financial effort to try to drain the terrorism swamp.

A lot has already been done to build the legal framework to fight terrorism.

The UN General Assembly has passed 12 separate conventions.

These conventions are quite specific, covering such issues as high-jacking, hostage-taking and explosives-marking, so bomb material can be traced.

Canada has ratified all twelve.

**(SLIDE #23 - Fighting Terror Together)**

Equally important is the resolution passed by the UN Security Council, Resolution 1373, which I promised earlier I would discuss further.

The wide range of action prescribed in that resolution – from denying financing and safe haven to encouraging compliance and implementation – is progressively constraining the capacity of international terrorists to act.

**(SLIDE #24 - The Canadian Dollar Cartoon)**

It is especially important that the Council is monitoring the implementation of the resolution by member countries - it is not the honour system.

What a monitoring mechanism on compliance with international obligations means is that commitments will have to be matched by action, that words will have to be matched by deeds.

The accent will initially be on cooperation and not coercion.

Canada submitted its own report in December detailing how we comply with Resolution 1373.

We have also volunteered to help those countries who need help to write their own counter-terrorism legislation and to implement it effectively

**(SLIDE #25 - Conclusion)**

In conclusion, there is no doubt in my mind that we will need the UN more than ever in the future.

Above all, it will continue to play a critical role in the maintenance and re-establishment of international peace and security.

It will be crucial in assisting countries to develop their own capacities to grow and prosper and to cooperate in running our planet.

It will continue to be the difference literally between life and death for countless refugees and internally displaced persons.

It will remain indispensable for the promotion of legal norms, human rights and the development of an international rules-based system.

The UN will become central to efforts to strengthen democracy and to help poorer governments to deliver education, healthcare and justice when they are unable adequately to do so on their own.

The UN will be central to winning the war against global terrorism.

**(SLIDE #26 - The cartoon on the earth)**

Good luck.

