

**STATEMENT GIVEN BY H.E. PAUL HEINBECKER, AMBASSADOR OF CANADA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE UNSC OPEN DEBATE ON IRAQ, FEBRUARY.  
19, 2003**

Mr. President,

Members of the Security Council.

The importance of the work being undertaken around this table is perhaps unprecedented.

History will judge the United Nations and this Security Council on how well you manage the Iraq crisis.

Around the world, people are speaking out, asking that this crisis be resolved peacefully.

No one wants a war.

But people also know Saddam Hussein's record of massive human rights abuse only too well.

And people know that, armed with weapons of mass destruction, he is a major threat to international peace and security in the region.

Since the UNSCOM inspectors withdrew in 1998, we have no evidence that Iraq has disposed of weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, we have reason to fear the opposite.

As UNSCOM and UNMOVIC have both reported, there are still major weapons unaccounted for and essential questions unanswered, especially in regard to biological and chemical weapons and missiles.

That is why the Council decided, unanimously, in UN Security Resolution 1441 that Iraq be given one last chance to answer these questions convincingly and to cooperate with the inspectors in disarming itself voluntarily, actively and transparently.

While we may be seeing the beginning of the kind of cooperation that should have been forthcoming years ago, this cooperation remains last minute, process-oriented and grudging.

As Chief Inspector Blix told this Council January 27, Saddam Hussein clearly has still not fully accepted his obligation to disarm.

Recent cooperation from Baghdad has come only in response to intense international pressure, including the deliberate and useful build up of US and UK military forces in the region.

The job of the inspectors is to verify Iraq's disarmament, not to search out weapons of mass destruction on their own.

More time for the inspectors, or even an intensified inspection process as suggested by some, could be useful but only if Iraq decides to cooperate fully, actively and transparently, beginning now.

The decision is Iraq's to make.

As Mr. Blix said on February 14, the period for disarmament through inspection could still be short, if Iraq was willing to cooperate.

Some see merit in making absolutely clear to Iraq what is required.

The world simply must have the answers to the as yet unanswered questions especially about the disposition of VX gas, anthrax and botulinum.

In order to spell out clearly to Iraq what is expected of it, and within what timelines, we suggest that the Council direct the inspectors: to lay out the list of key remaining disarmament tasks immediately and to establish those on which evidence of Iraqi compliance is most urgently required.

The Council should also establish an early deadline for Iraqi compliance.

This process would provide the Council the basis on which to assess Iraqi compliance.

More importantly, it would allow the Security Council and the international community to judge whether Iraq is cooperating on substance and not just on process.

Everyone understands what disarmament looks like.

The case study of South Africa is often cited because that country took the decision to get out of the business of weapons of mass destruction and did so with determination, transparency and purpose.

Iraq can do the same if it so decides.

This crisis is not only about weapons of mass destruction.

It is also about people, especially the people of Iraq, who have already suffered under Saddam Hussein through two wars and a decade of sanctions.

The humanitarian situation in that country is already grave.

60% of the population depend on the food distributed under the Oil for Food Program.

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable; they need protection.

For years, member states have called on humanitarian agencies to get ahead of the curve in response to a possible crisis.

Canada applauds the efforts of UN agencies and non-governmental organizations to undertake critical contingency planning.

It is critically important that they do so this time.

The Government of Canada urges all the members of this Council to keep the welfare of the Iraqi people at the heart of your deliberations.

As Prime Minister Chrétien stated in Chicago on February 13, the whole world hopes that Saddam Hussein will act even at this late hour.

By respecting the wishes of the world community and by complying with successive UN resolutions, including 1441, he can ensure that his people are spared further suffering.

The Government and people of Canada want a peaceful resolution to this crisis.

And we believe that a peaceful resolution remains possible.

The world asks that the Council spare no effort to try to find common ground.

Division would have profound consequences for regional and international peace and security, for the authority of this Council and for the standing of the UN.

Multilateral institutions are essential to managing our ever more integrated world.

The world needs the UN to emerge from this crisis, strengthened not diminished.

Iraq is only the latest of what will surely be other threats to our common peace and security, not least from international terrorism.

A strengthened UN will serve everyone's interests, big and small.

The Government and people of Canada are fully prepared to accept the judgements of the inspectors and the decisions of this Council.

Canada will assume its responsibilities accordingly.