

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PAUL HEINBECKER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN MEETING ON THE SITUATION BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT

NEW YORK, 11 MARCH 2003

Mr. President,

It is entirely appropriate that Council members meet today with the broader membership of the United Nations.

It is difficult to exaggerate the stake each nation in this room has in your deliberations.

Peace and war hang in the balance.

The peoples we represent here have invested their hopes in the integrity, the effectiveness and the relevance of this institution.

They are counting on your wisdom, your experience, your resolve and, above all, on your humanity to decide in their names how the challenge of Iraq will be met.

In their names, therefore, we call upon you to acquit your solemn obligations to them, to probe every compromise, to explore every avenue and to exhaust every effort to solve this problem, together.

The Government and people of Canada want this issue resolved under the banner of the United Nations, peacefully if possible, militarily if necessary.

Iraq will not be the last crisis the nations gathered here will need to face together.

It is all too painfully obvious, however, that this Council is profoundly divided and that that division threatens the very collective security vocation of the United Nations.

The first step to regaining the unity that is indispensable to success is to recognize that positions on both sides are held with deep conviction.

And that both sides have valid arguments.

An open-ended inspection process would relieve the pressure on Iraq to disarm.

The record leaves no doubt that the Iraqi authorities have only begun to disarm because they face heavy outside pressure, including the indispensable build-up of military force by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and others, and on the willingness of the international community to back diplomacy with force if necessary.

On the other hand, a foreshortened inspections process would create worrying doubt whether war was indeed the last resort.

And military action without a Security Council mandate in this case would risk undermining respect for international law and raise questions about this crucial body and its authority and efficacy.

The division of this Council has regrettably drawn the focus of the world away from the crucial issue of disarming Iraq and shifted it, instead, onto diplomatic competition .

That serves no one's interests but Saddam Hussein's.

On February 18, the Government of Canada proposed a set of ideas to bridge this very destructive divide.

We suggested that the key remaining disarmament tasks be established and prioritized by the weapons inspectors and that a deadline be established for Iraq to implement them.

We agree with Dr. Blix that while cooperation by Iraq must be immediate and proactive, disarmament and verification cannot be instantaneous.

More time is needed for the inspectors to do the job this body has given them so that we can all judge whether Iraqi cooperation goes beyond process to substance.

More time for inspections, however, will only be useful if Iraq implements resolution 1441 and preceding resolutions.

And that means a deadline.

Since the Council last met with the general membership to discuss the situation in Iraq, there has undeniably been some progress.

We have seen encouraging instances of actual disarmament, particularly with respect to nuclear weapons and missile stocks.

UN inspectors continue to verify the destruction of proscribed missiles, munitions are being unearthed, interviews on the inspectors' terms are beginning to take place, unimpeded and immediate access to any and all sites is now a matter of course, no nuclear materials have been found and no nuclear weapons program has apparently been reconstituted.

But we have equally seen signs of Iraqi business as usual, and we have been disturbed that Iraq has not done much more, much sooner.

If Iraq has nothing to hide, it has nothing to fear from facilitating private meetings of its scientists and officials with weapons inspectors outside of Iraq.

We still do not have the answers we need to crucial questions about Iraq's past chemical and biological weapons production and of its residual capabilities and programs, now.

We are yet to see the evidence that would convince us that Iraq no longer possesses or intends to reacquire weapons of mass destruction.

We still fear that the opposite may be true.

The Government of Canada believes that a message of absolute clarity and urgency needs to be sent from this Council to the Iraqi Government as to what is required of it and by when.

First, we believe Iraq's leadership should be asked to publicly direct all levels of the Iraqi Government to take all necessary disarmament decisions in the interests of the Iraqi people and of the region.

Saddam Hussein has seemed to stand apart from the disarmament process, in apparent disdain of Council directions.

That cannot continue if Iraqi protestations of cooperation are to be believed.

Second, the Council should ask Dr. Blix to bring forward the program of work urgently, within a week, including the list of key remaining disarmament tasks that the Government of Iraq must perform.

Dr. Blix should establish the priorities among those tasks, particularly the biological and chemical weapons priorities, especially concerning bulk quantities of anthrax, the disposition of the chemical agent VX and evidence regarding chemical weapons shells, bombs and other munitions.

He should also stipulate the urgent and imperative steps required of the Government of Iraq to implement those tasks.

At the same time, it is obvious that disarmament and verification cannot be instantaneous.

Third, we believe, therefore, that the Council should set a deadline of three weeks for Iraq to demonstrate conclusively that it is implementing these tasks and is cooperating actively and effectively on substance, on real disarmament, and not only on process.

Fourth, to keep the pressure on Iraq, the Council should consider authorizing member states now to eventually use all necessary means to force compliance, unless, on the basis of on-going inspectors' reports, it concludes that the Government of Iraq is complying.

We are convinced that Iraq is substantially contained and that, if it cooperates, can be disarmed without a shot being fired.

If, by the deadline, the Government of Iraq were found by the Security Council to be cooperating fully and actively with the inspectors and disarming or otherwise complying with UN resolutions, a further deadline could be set.

These deadlines could be repeated until the disarmament goals of resolutions 1441 and 1284 are met and we are confident that enhanced, on-going verification and monitoring are likely to be effective.

Finally, a sustained inspection and monitoring system would need to be put in place after verified disarmament in order to give the international community confidence and to alert the international community immediately if the Government of Iraq sought to reestablish proscribed weapons programmes.

Colleagues, the United Nations and this Security Council are coming to a political watershed.

Your decision on Iraq will not only affect the lives and well-being of the Iraqi people and of their neighbours but also impact regional stability and the security of all of us.

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

Like the vast majority of the UN membership, we oppose military intervention, except as a last resort.

We understand the challenge you face.

We ask only that you spare no effort to unite to meet this crucial challenge and to ensure that the Government of Iraq is no longer a threat to its neighbours and to international peace and security.

Your decision will determine whether the people of the countries represented in this chamber will have been justified in putting their faith in the promise of the idea of the United Nations.

May you find the wisdom and the will to ensure, as well, that the United Nations emerges from this crisis enhanced, not diminished, so that it can "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", its most solemn purpose.

For our part, the people and Government of Canada will support the judgements of the inspectors and respect the decisions of this Council.