

REMARKS GIVEN BY H.E. MR. PAUL HEINBECKER, BEFORE THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL OPEN DEBATE ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

NEW YORK, APRIL 3, 2002.

Mr. President,

I welcome the opportunity to speak at this debate and to endorse Security Council Resolutions 1397 and 1402.

These instruments point the way out of the ever-worsening spiral of violence in the Middle East.

That spiral of violence is threatening peace and stability well beyond the confines of the current fighting.

And it is having disastrous consequences for people on both sides.

People's rights, their hopes, their dignity, their lives are being progressively violated, denied, diminished and destroyed.

Canada calls on both parties to step back from the brink.

We call on the Council to help them bring this catastrophe to an end.

To the Palestinians, we say that the use of suicide bombers against innocents is intolerable, a perversion of all religious faiths, an offence against humanity, and a tactic that is never acceptable, including in resistance to occupation.

Employing children as instruments of war to target the innocent is a moral outrage.

It must stop.

Chairman Arafat and those in positions of authority who fail to prevent such practices bear the gravest personal and political responsibility.

The world sees post-facto condemnations for the empty gestures they are.

To Israel, we say that Canada fully recognizes Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized border and its right to self-defence against terrorist acts.

We nonetheless consider that continuing Israeli incursions into Palestinians towns and cities feed the spiral of violence.

The physical destruction of civilian infrastructure and the mounting toll of killed and injured is putting peace and normal life progressively further out of reach for ordinary people on both sides.

Impeding humanitarian access only adds to the mounting bitterness.

Canada calls for the prompt withdrawal of Israeli troops from Ramallah and other Palestinian-controlled areas as called for by Security Council Resolution 1402.

Ongoing Israeli settlement construction undermines any hope for re-establishing a peace process and erodes trust.

We call on Israel to end this destabilizing action.

In the interest of peace, it must stop.

To the Israelis and Palestinians, neither the status quo ante nor the status quo is acceptable.

It appears nevertheless that the Palestinians and Israelis are unable to end this conflict and develop a new modus vivendi on their own.

There is already disturbing evidence that the violence is metastasizing well beyond Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.

The international community must help the parties find an exit strategy from the spiral of violence and a political roadmap to peace.

Grievances are deepening and will poison relations for generations to come.

The tools are already in hand; they must be applied without delay.

The Tenet plan; the Mitchell report, the Arab League's endorsement of Crown Prince Abdullah's initiative, together provide elements of such a roadmap back from the abyss.

The international community must do all in its power to bring the parties back to the negotiating table they left 14 months ago and to resume the quest for a political solution.

We all know what the outcome must be.

How many innocent people must die or be maimed physically and psychologically before reason again prevails?

Let us all take to heart the Secretary-General's words in Beirut,: "In the desperate search for peace, we should never lose hope".

Peace in the Middle East is everyone's business.

Let the members of the Council commit themselves to work indefatigably to stop the spiral of violence.

Let us all, in our own ways, commit ourselves to support the parties to decisively stem the bloodshed and to definitively still this conflict.

Thank you.