

REMARKS GIVEN BY H.E. MR. PAUL HEINBECKER PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS BEFORE THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

NEW YORK, April 18, 2002

Mr. President,

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to once again address the Council.

The Council has already established the basic conditions necessary to help the parties step back from the brink.

The international community has spoken with one voice.

Yet the conflict continues. The appalling casualty toll grows. And the promise of peace recedes.

There is no shortage of proposals to bring an end to the violence and to build a bridge to peace.

The details may vary - and the details are important - but together they are all based on the fundamental principle of "land for peace" set out in landmark resolutions 242, 338 and 1397 agreed in this Council.

They envision two states living side-by-side in peace and security, a vision shared by all.

It is evident that the two sides cannot realize that vision on their own.

That vision can only be made reality by the full and active participation, including on the ground, of the international community.

This conflict has implications that go well beyond the Middle East and the Secretary General has offered a bold and courageous view of the way ahead.

He understands that any solution will require the sustained involvement of parties from both inside and outside of the region.

We agree with the Secretary General that the time has come to consider how we collectively can help the parties to call a halt to the fighting once and for all.

It is past time for all concerned to put the protection of the Israeli and Palestinian people at the center of our international calculations and do whatever it takes to bring about the peace they so desperately want and need.

The current situation cannot be allowed to continue.

The dreadful loss of life on both sides, the humanitarian suffering, and, most fundamentally, the destruction of hope, all must stop.

Horrific suicide bombings and the devastation that we have witnessed in Jenin and elsewhere lead only deeper into the vortex of hate, fear and despair.

The Government of Canada believes that the way out of the descent into oblivion exists.

It exists in resolutions 1397, 1402 and 1403 of this Council; it exists in the unique authority of the Secretary General; it exists in the unique power of the United States Government united behind its Secretary of State; it exists in the constructive engagement of the countries in the region, including through the plan put forward by Saudi Arabia and adopted by the Arab League; and it exists in the efforts of the wider international community represented in this institution.

Taken together, the components of peace are all there.

Canada has been urging the parties to take the steps necessary to create an environment where a third-party presence could play a constructive role.

With experience in every peacekeeping operation in the region since the start of the conflict, Canada believes that such a presence would help the situation.

As Prime Minister Chr  tien recently stated, if asked, Canada is prepared to participate in such a presence.

Canada welcomes the Secretary General's proposals and we look forward to studying them in more detail.

The components of peace exist.

What is lacking is a demonstrable commitment to peace from both sides.

We call on Israel and the Palestinians to comply with UN resolutions 1397, 1402 and 1403.

Israel must immediately end the destruction of Palestinian civil infrastructure, withdraw its forces from the West Bank and cease all settlement building.

The Palestinian authority and Chairman Arafat must denounce and prevent and punish terrorism directed at the innocent.

Let us be clear that the aspiration of a Palestinian State, an aspiration which Canada supports, will never be achieved through suicide bombings of the innocent.

Next, I wish to address the unacceptable humanitarian situation.

This Council has passed two resolutions on protecting civilians in armed conflict, 1265 (1999) and 1296 (2000).

Those resolutions, and the action they envisaged, were not elective prescriptions, to be observed or ignored at the convenience of the protagonists.

They are not mere guidelines; they clearly and forcefully remind states of their obligations under international law, notably the Geneva Conventions.

Canada calls on the parties to comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

To the Palestinians, we reiterate our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of attacks on civilians, including suicide bombing attacks.

They are violations of international humanitarian law, they are morally repugnant, and they are strategically self-defeating.

To Israel we say that Israel too has an obligation to respect civilians and must refrain from indiscriminate attacks which harm civilians.

Israel has particular responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Canada calls on the Government of Israel to ensure that the Israeli Defence Forces cooperate with international organizations in dealing with the situation in Jenin and fulfill its obligations under international law to provide or to allow others to provide food, water and other humanitarian assistance to the suffering, including the residents of Jenin.

International organizations such as the ICRC must be granted full and unhindered access to the camps and to the detainees.

Curfews must be lifted so that the humanitarian organizations can carry out effectively the crucial job that needs to be done.

We applaud the dedication of human rights and humanitarian organizations workers as they courageously carry out their jobs.

Today, Canada announced an additional \$8 million in humanitarian assistance.

We are also concerned about the ongoing situation in Bethlehem at the Church of the Nativity.

We call upon the two sides to avoid further needless casualties.

Finally, we call upon the leaders of both sides must make the indispensable strategic decision for peace.

Their people will bear the tragic consequences if they do not.

Thank you.