

Remarks given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations to the Students and Faculty of Cornell University Ithaca

New York, 20 February 2002

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today, with so many young people so interested in international affairs in general and in the United Nations and Canada in particular.

My generation inherited the UN from my parents' generation, from leaders like former Prime Minister Lester Pearson, who conceived of the UN, created it and ultimately bequeathed it to us.

Soon my generation's inheritance will become our legacy, to you.

I have two simple messages for you today that I believe passionately.

First, you are going to need the UN and second, the UN is going to need you.

The UN is uniquely universal and its mandate is uniquely comprehensive.

It is a cliché that the Internet, television and travel are transforming the ways we live and live together.

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

Isolation is not an option

And the UN is not dispensable.

In fact, you will find the UN indispensable if you want to live in a world that is more than an aggregation of national gated communities.

My purpose today is to sketch out both the breadth of the UN's field of work and its importance, neither of which is fully appreciated by the UN's critics.

Your generation is going to need the UN because there are limits to both unilateralism and multilateralism.

Multilateralism and unilateralism are both necessary at times and neither is ever sufficient. If the UN is going to serve you fully, your generation will need to succeed in adapting the UN to changing times where my generation has so far inadequately done so.

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

It is an engagingly human, uniquely representative organization.

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

By what 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.

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 protect us all.

The UN helps deliver the rule of law - instead of the law of the jungle.

The UN is its five principal organs (the Trusteeship Council is dormant), its Funds and Programs (e.g., UNICEF), and its quasi-independent Specialized Agencies (e.g. UNESCO).

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

To illustrate, when I flew to Syracuse, my flight was 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 these organizations, and their positive impacts on our lives, quite for granted.

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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 ill-informed or malevolent commentators 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 effectiveness 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 arena than parliament, a forum for discussion and debate, a generator of ideas and policy, a locus for norm setting and international law codification.

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

The Security Council is not the world's cabinet - it deals with peace and security only.

When the Security council exercises its authority to maintain international peace and security, however, 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.

As for the Secretariat, while it is the product of 189 bureaucratic cultures, it too is becoming more effective, albeit slowly.

Increasingly, the UN is also the sum of its global conferences, where public consciousness is raised and political will is mobilized, where new ideas are advocated and new norms 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 civil society and, sometimes dramatically, though more often imperceptibly, has changed the way people think, and their governments act.

The UN has helped to develop some of the biggest ideas of our times – and to produce some of the world's major advances.

For example:

- **Collective Security** - the idea that member states uniting through an international organization can help prevent war and maintain or restore peace.
- **Independence** - the idea that all states are sovereign and equal and the indispensable instruments of the will of their own peoples; there were 51 independent member countries in 1945, 100 in 1960, 153 in 1990 and 189 today.
- **Human rights** - the idea that every individual, male and female, adult and child, boy and girl, from the poorest African village to the remotest Afghan valley, has inalienable rights.
- **Humanitarian Assistance** - the idea that the international community can and should come to the assistance of those dispossessed by war or natural disaster.
- **Development** - the idea that sound economic and social policies cooperatively pursued can lift millions out of poverty and improve the welfare and living standards of all people.
- **Sustainable Development** - the idea that the imperatives of environmental protection and economic growth can be reconciled and that acting collectively, nations can protect the world's Commons for future generations.

The UN has been ahead of the curve on these ideas which, while not original or exclusive to the UN, have been given remarkable impetus and legitimacy by the endorsement and commitment of our one universal organization.

And the next big idea may well be **Terrorism** - how the world is going to excise this cancer from the international body politic.

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

Under "frustrations", there are the constant wrangles over the Middle East.

There are also the issues that do not come to the Council – Kashmir is one, despite the fact that two nuclear weapons states have been 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 the five permanent members, that it remained mute when the Secretary-General accepted responsibility on behalf of the UN and that the Council 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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2001 was one of the busiest 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.

The cost to Americans? \$2.90 per person - per year, a bargain.

“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.

They employ thousands of administrators and civilian police in addition to soldiers.

By the way, Canada currently ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> among UN troop contributors, with 191 troops, 19 military observers and 85 civilian police deployed to 9 UN operations.

Although we have always been active in the area of UN peacekeeping, most of the Canadian Forces' deployments abroad today are with NATO in the Balkans and with U.S. forces in Afghanistan, a total of 3,300.

(By the end of February, the deployment of a battle group to Kandahar will push the total Canadian Forces abroad past 4,200).

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.

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

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, once operational, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which Canada is helping the UN to establish, will try those individuals 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 expected to come into force within the next twelve months, 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.

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 has recently 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.

In Canada and the U.S., about 7-9 per 1,000.

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 negative as the cynics would have you believe. The UN is at the heart of these development efforts.

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There is, however, one 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 and standing 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 breadth of the UN organization makes it uniquely equipped to respond.

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

Since 1999, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has run operations assisting 2.6 million refugees from Afghanistan, 1 million from 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 current conflict.

UNESCO bakeries produced bread in the most dire circumstances.

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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.

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.

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.

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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.

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

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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 starving international terrorism of its support..

Kofi Annan has personally brought new purpose and authority to the position of Secretary-General.

From HIV/AIDS, to including civil society and global industry, to peace-keeping reform to the defence of the abused and repressed, he has brought new ideas, new courage and new power to the UN’s principles and purposes.

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 through this winter and 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.

It must find a way to bring into being and to support an administration 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 international 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 haven for terrorists.

Afghanistan is not the only failed state; there are others, notably Somalia, where disorder provides the ideal conditions for terrorism to prosper.

Over time, the UN will have to engage these challenges as well.

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

The war against terrorism is, in effect, a war against an abstraction with no fixed (national) address.

The UN and multilateralism have their limits.

What the UN can do, and will do, is lead the legal and economic effort 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 and is working on a thirteenth and possibly eventually a fourteenth.

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

Canada has already ratified and implemented the first 11 conventions.

The Canadian Government's Anti-terrorism Act has been passed by Parliament and we will shortly ratify the twelfth treaty.

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of Security Council Resolution 1373.

The wide range of action prescribed in that resolution – from denying financing and safe haven to encouraging compliance with treaties and capacity building – will take the fight to the terrorists.

We are particularly pleased that the Council has established a committee to monitor the implementation of the resolution by reviewing the action taken – or not taken – by countries.

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.

In December, Canada submitted its own report detailing Canadian compliance with Resolution 1373.

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

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In conclusion, there is no doubt that you will need the UN.

No other organization has the legitimacy of universal membership or the full range of tools to manage international affairs.

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

But the UN will also be crucial in assisting poorer countries to develop their own capacities to grow and prosper.

It is and will regrettably remain literally the difference between life and death to countless refugees and internally displaced persons.

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

The UN is central to efforts to improve governance in poorer countries and to help governments to deliver healthcare and education when they are unable adequately to do so on their own.

The UN is essential to winning the war against terrorism.

There is also no doubt that the UN will need you.

It will need you to believe in it and it will need you to fix what's broken about it.

In an organization mortgaged to its permanent members and their vetoes, super sensitive to post-colonial aspirations and apprehensions and grappling with globalization, reform will not come

easily.

Particularly while the organization is simultaneously managing highly complex crises on four continents.

But the poor and dispossessed, the abused and repressed will nevertheless depend on the UN for their survival.

And you will depend on the UN to help build a world worth living in.

You will have to re-invent the UN for their sakes... and for yours.

The first steps of this long voyage start here at Cornell, TODAY.

Good luck.