

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY PAUL HEINBECKER, AMBASSADOR OF  
CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT UNSC OPEN DEBATE ON IRAQ,  
FEBRUARY. 18, 2003**

Mr. President,

Members of the Security Council.

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

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 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.

Since the UNSCOM inspectors withdrew in 1998, we have no knowledge of any disarmament in Iraq.

In fact, we have reason to fear the opposite.

And as UNSCOM and UNMOVIC have both reported, there are still weapons unaccounted for and 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 or to disarm 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 has all too often been process-oriented, last minute and grudging.

As Chief Inspector Blix told this Council January 28, Saddam Hussein has still not fully accepted his obligation to disarm.

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

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

The decision is Iraq's to make.

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, would be useful but only if Iraq decides to cooperate fully, actively and transparently, beginning now.

Canada has strongly supported the framework set out in UNSCR 1441.

Many see merit in the Council's giving Iraq clarity on what is required to conform with 1441.

This could entail a near-term deadline for cooperation on substance rather than process.

The world must know the disposition of VX gas, anthrax and botulinum.

We suggest that the Council direct the inspectors to table the key remaining disarmament tasks urgently.

The Government of Canada, of course, defers to the Council on the modalities of the implementation of resolution 1441.

But, that said, the Government of Canada would support an immediate approach which brought clarity to the remaining disarmament tasks.

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 could do the same if it so decided.

This crisis is not only about weapons of mass destruction.

It is also about people, above all 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. (Debra to fix)

Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable.

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

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

It is critically important that they do so this time.

Canada urges this Council also 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 to spare his people further suffering.

If Saddam Hussein refuses to comply with the wishes of the world community and comply with successive UN resolutions, including 1441, the world will respond.

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

And we believe that a peaceful resolution remains possible.

At the same time, we are fully prepared to accept the judgement of the inspectors and the decisions this Council makes.

Canada will assume its responsibilities accordingly.

We ask that this Council do so as well.

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.

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

Iraq is only the latest of what will surely be other challenges to global peace and security that will all face, not least from international terrorism.

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

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