

**Statement by H.E. Paul Heinbecker, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of
Canada to the United Nations on the Report of the Security Council,
New York, October 13, 2003**

Merci M. le Président,

Aujourd'hui, je vais développer trois idées :

- 1° Nous aurions pu nous contenter d'un seul débat sur ces questions, au lieu de deux.
- 2° Il est possible d'améliorer d'avantage les méthodes du Conseil de sécurité.
- 3° Et surtout, nous devons tous appuyer la grande réforme amorcée par le secrétaire général, tout en poursuivant nos propres efforts pour réformer le Conseil, cette Assemblée et les autres organes de l'ONU.

Nous sommes heureux de constater une fois de plus que le rapport du Conseil de sécurité est plus concis que ceux des années passées.

Ceci est un pas en avance qui devrait faciliter nos délibérations.

Cela dit, je suis déçu que nous ayons aussi fait un pas en arrière.

L'année passée, nous avons institué un débat commun sur le rapport du Conseil de sécurité et la question de la représentation au Conseil.

Nous revenons cette année à la formule des deux débats, ce qui demande plus de temps et semble aller à l'encontre des projets de réforme.

Voilà qui est particulièrement regrettable alors que le Secrétaire général s'appête à former son groupe de personnalités éminentes chargé d'étudier les projets de réforme.

Nous pouvons et nous devons employer notre temps à meilleur escient.

As regards the Council's methods, we would like to see:

- still greater transparency;
- greater self-discipline in the recourse to the threat or use of the veto;
- a voluntary commitment by veto holders to explain to the entire membership the rationale why in each case a veto has been used;
- and, as regards the Council's treatment of the International Criminal Court, greater adherence to the UN Charter.

We would also like to see more systematic consultation with non-Council members on matters of significant interest to them.

We are pleased, in this regard, that the Council has begun to consult troop contributing countries more formally on military mission mandates.

None of us here has any doubt that today we live in troubled times.

Times when soldiers of peace are attacked, such as the two Canadian soldiers killed in Kabul just ten days ago, or the 22 UN staffers killed in Baghdad two months ago.

These were attacks against us all for we are the United Nations.

We live in times when terrorists target the innocent;
when abject poverty is the daily reality for so many of our fellow human beings;

and when some leaders have to be reminded that the state exists for the people, not the people for the state,

that sovereignty entails responsibilities,

and that the primordial responsibility of states – and their leaders – is to protect their own people;

Most germane for the people in this room, we are living in times when many of our own people are losing faith in our organization and its – that is to say, our – ability to respond to these challenges.

Clearly the UN has much to be proud of,

from its 50 plus years of peacekeeping operations,

to the arms control regimes it has created,

to the six core human rights treaties it has passed,

to the international courts, especially the ICC, that it has sponsored,

to the 120 environmental agreements it has brought about,

to the children it has fed and educated and inoculated,

to the refugees it has saved and sheltered,

to the leadership it is providing on health, particularly on HIV-AIDS.

But, equally clearly, all is not well here.

As Secretary General Annan indicated during his address to the General Assembly on September 23, we are coming to a fork in the road.

Few among us would disagree that our organization needs thorough, far-reaching reform.

To continue with business as usual in these circumstances would be an exercise in complacency and an abdication of responsibility.

We need to reconsider both what this organization does and how it does it.

In considering these purposes and practices, we need to serve the interests of both the least and the greatest amongst us.

Otherwise we risk being inadequate to the needs of the former and irrelevant to the fears of the latter.

We need, as the Secretary General said here September 23, in his seminal address, “to face up squarely to the concerns that make some states feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action.”

We need, no less urgently, to agree that we have a collective responsibility to protect the innocent,

by preventing conflicts, by reacting to conflicts where we have not succeeded in preventing them and by rebuilding societies after the conflicts end.

We need to ensure that we deal effectively with the weaknesses of both the Security Council and of the other organs of the UN, including the General Assembly.

That is why we welcome the Secretary General’s decision to establish a panel of eminent persons, to make recommendations to states both on what the UN does and how the UN does, or should do, it.

It is an idea Canada heartily endorses.

The Secretary General is seeking to break the reform logjam.

Let us work with him and with his panel of eminent persons so that, in a year’s time, they can make the soundest possible proposals for change to our governments.

Meanwhile, let us keep an open mind on what that change should entail.

And, in the interim, let us go on, ourselves, improving the way we do business, including here in the General Assembly.

Let us resolve here that the 191 delegations that inhabit this place will be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Reflecting on his experience with the United Nations, the late Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, a former President of the General Assembly, wrote that

“the growth of the United Nations into a truly effective world organization was our best, and perhaps our last, hope ...

if mankind was to end a savage tradition that the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.”

In the intervening 50 odd years, we have made enormous progress.

But times change, needs change and the UN needs to change with them.

Prime Minister Pearson’s generation bequeathed us this magnificent, crucial organization.

It is up to our generation to renew and regenerate it.
None of us here doubts that multilateral cooperation is indispensable.

Or that global issues respond only to global solutions.

Or that the UN is and must be at the heart of the multilateral system and is, or should be, essential to the legitimacy of international actions..

No time is perfect for reform but a historic opportunity is emerging here.

Let us seize that opportunity.

Our parents and grandparents, realistic idealists who had experienced the worst war in history, bequeathed to us the extraordinary idea

- that nations could unite to build better lives for their people
- that they could unite to safeguard the rights and dignity of the men and women of nations large and small
- that they could unite to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

That dream remains unfulfilled for many people.

And, for all people, the dream at times recedes.

But it remains a dream that time has not mocked.

At San Francisco, the leaders of another generation, in times no easier than these, dreamt of a better world and created an institution with which to build it.

Let us, let our generation, revive the dream.

And let it be said of us, by the generation that follows us, that we were worthy descendants of the giants who created this place.

And that, when challenged, we did not fail them or their idea of the United Nations that they bequeathed us.

Thank you, Mr. President.