

Statement made by H.E. Paul Heinbecker, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations to the General Assembly on the Emergency Special Session on the situation in the Middle East, New York, October 21, 2003

Canada has voted in favour of this resolution. Canada affirms the right of Israel to assure its own security. Neither terrorism nor support for terrorists who target the innocent - in whatever form to advance whatever cause - can ever be justified. Israel has the right to take necessary measures to protect the security of its citizens and its borders from attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups, including by restricting access to its territory.

While we respect Israel's right and obligation to defend its citizens, Canada opposes all unilateral actions which could predetermine the outcome of final status negotiations, including the construction of an extensive security barrier by Israel on land inside the occupied territory of the West Bank. Canada considers the expropriation of land to facilitate the construction of this barrier to be unacceptable.

We are moreover concerned with the highly prejudicial impact this barrier may have on the already-flagging prospects for peace. Further its adverse effect on the ever dire humanitarian and economic situation in the Occupied Territories is worrisome. We fear that the scope and location of the barrier being constructed further undermines the hopes of the many who yet yearn for peace.

While such unilateral actions outside of the territory of the state of Israel raise serious matters of international law, Canada believes that ultimately this tragic ongoing conflict can only be resolved politically. A just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East remains possible. The Road Map is still a viable instrument for achieving this goal. Canada calls on the parties to acquit their obligations and to return to the negotiating table.