

**Meeting of Canadian Executive Directors to the  
International Financial Institutions  
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**TALKING POINTS**

I am pleased to be here today.

It is not often enough that senior Canadian officials at the UN and the BW institutions sit down together to talk about how the multilateral system as a whole is working and whether we are getting maximum impact for the investments we are making.

I am not a development expert but I thought I might nonetheless set out some of the UN's attributes and asked you whether we are making best use of what the UN has to offer.

First, the UN, built on the ashes of the Second World War, was based on a vision of how the world could be: a world where international co-operation would ensure peace, security and economic and social progress (as development was called then) for all member states and peoples.

Despite all the failures the UN has experienced, we should not sell that unifying vision short.

Nine Nobel Prizes are a testimony to the vision's power and to its frequent accomplishments.

Second, the UN membership is universal, which builds a sense of inclusiveness and ownership.

Through all the strain of decolonization, from about 50 members in 1950 through the admission of one China, then a different China, and then one Vietnam, of two Vietnams, two Germanies, and then one Germany, and two Koreas, still, sadly, the UN has worked to be and to remain inclusive of states, of cultures and of ideas - 30 countries since the end of the Cold War.

At its New York Headquarters, it represents a place where diplomats can meet quietly and even noisily on tough issues.

New York is one part forum, one part parliament, one part asylum.

In the field, the UN Development Program offices, and UN Resident Co-ordinators, are, as well as the hands, the "eyes and ears" for the UN Secretary General and member states to understand better complex situations and to keep a watchful eye on impending man made and physical

disasters.

Third, because of its universality and its vision, it has retained a moral authority, and a legitimacy of voice, even though it has no military clout or power of its own.

Fourth, its programs, funds and specialized agencies cover the full spectrum of human endeavour -- the domains of the political, military, human rights, humanitarian, economic, social, environmental and cultural.

The advantage is that the UN approaches issues - e.g. in Sierra Leone – in an integrated and holistic way.

Fifth, the UN's power of convocation allows for unparalleled co-operation and social organization - often codified into international law.

Progress on peaceful uses of outer space in the 70s, the Law of the Sea in the 80s, the International Criminal Court in the 90's, terrorism now, preserve the global commons.

The work of the specialized agencies has led to the increased production of global public goods such as civil aviation, postal services or health.

Sixth, its uncompromising insistence on human rights for each person, male or female, child or adult, impoverished or rich, born into an authoritarian or democratic state, in addition to its insistence on the rule of the law, has set new standards of behaviour.

Human rights, respect for the person, and for empowering each person to realize her or his full potential, has also led to a deepened understanding of what human development and human poverty is all about.

Human development reaches beyond economic growth to the multidimensional realities of human potential.

The UN, from its understanding of human rights and the power of inclusiveness and solidarity, has moved quite a long way, perhaps further than most multilateral bodies in reaching beyond the constricts of the nation state to the private sector and other partners in civil society to move the global agenda ahead.

- Global compact...
- relationship with NGO's - a mixed blessing.

So, what has all this got to do with the BWIs?

Let me first hasten to state what it does not mean.

It does not mean that the UN can do everything, or that it secretly aspires to.

No serious person sees the UN as a rival to the IMF on macroeconomic and structural matters.

Nor does anyone serious pretend that it can match economic expertise of the BW institutions.

The leaders of its development funds and programs have stated clearly that they are there to support developing countries working within the framework of PRSPs and to help evolve the frameworks, not to compete with them.

But it does mean that the UN's unique attributes can help.

It has an ability to operate in areas, or in ways others do not.

One, it can set international policies, frameworks, norms and standards and rules of conduct that guide the civilized conduct of nations.

The WHO decides on the necessity of disposable syringes for immunizations; the Codex Alimentarius set out food safety standards, the m/s of the IAEA set the standards of nuclear safety and so on.

Two, these very forums, as well as many of the new partnerships the UN has been behind (such as GAVI or the Global Health Fund) can help develop and produce global public goods in greater quantity than would otherwise exist.

Three, the UN can monitor performance against agreed standards, using its moral and legal authority to promote implementation, on issues as diverse as terrorism, land mines, nuclear energy, and the Millennium Development Goals.

Four, it can play a unique role in conflict situations and in conflict prevention.

Because the UN's global reach means that it is there before, during and after conflicts.

And because it can bridge from political and military issues to human rights, humanitarian and developmental concerns.

For example, after September 11th, UN personnel (in Afghanistan and neighbouring states) delivered the immunization program as planned?

Women's bakeries continued to operate with the support of UNICEF.

And of course, it was the legitimacy of the UN that gave it the convening power for the peace talks in Geneva.

Even now, it is the UN's, albeit very imperfect, political, peace building and humanitarian/developmental capacities are at work during these early difficult days in Afghanistan -- where political stability and people's survival are the critical agenda.

In fact, according to Louise Frechette, the UNDP has a real niche role in transition phases from war to peace.

Five, the UN is a reservoir of much intellectual property and learning.

Its funds, programs and specialized agencies are often at the cutting edge of socio-political thinking, of what makes and mends the fabric of societies.

Of how to implement universal values in a culturally diverse world.

Of how to build national capacity.

Or of how to move forward the global governance agenda.

Also, the UN has played a role on policy development.

Little by little, the world has come to a substantial consensus on major common goals.

A lot of the agreement was developed at the major conferences - the Funds and Programs have led this process.

Six, let me just spend a moment on capacity building.

In the early days of the UN and World Bank and regional banks, the UN and more particularly the UNDP was expected to be the multilateral technical co-operation provider, while the banks were the large lenders of "bankable" projects, with clearly identifiable financial returns on investment, often in the infrastructure areas.

Over time these roles have become blurred, even more so now with the World Bank moving into grant funding.

There may be nothing right or wrong about such a move - because there are huge gaps in development finance so that integrated development funding often makes sense.

Otherwise, the Bank would only engage credit worthy countries.

And the UNDP was not always as good as it is now.

But if the World Bank's move to grants happens at the expense of the UN's role in capacity building, it would impact negatively on UN work with developing countries in support of their doing their own analyses, identifying their own needs and determining their policies and programs.

That would be a loss, not least because recipients feel more empowered by the UN than by the Bank, according to the UN at least.

The UNDP and other UN programs entail a relationship of trust, availability of choices and options, as well as solid experience, for the capacity development, which are important if there are to be genuinely country owned and holistic development strategies.

I am not suggesting that the UN's political, security or developmental budgets need massive amounts of funding or that they are any kind of substitute for the work of the BWIs.

But there is a strong argument that the UN, with its vision, universality, legitimacy, and breadth of activity, is a constructive and needed player in today's world.

And that it makes sense to re-invest in its political and developmental machinery and to make it

an ongoing and real partner in supporting developing countries' own plans and strategies.

And that it is up to donors to insist on clarity as between organizations, that they not compete, that they not duplicate.

Thank you.