

Remarks given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker  
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

On September 11, the world changed and in ways we are only beginning to fathom.

In North America, we lost our innocence, we learned, or re-learned, that we are not immune to conflict in our own homeland.

We learned that there is no safe distance from terrorism, that we really do not live in a fireproof house.

We learned that we too were going to have to reconcile the contradictions of liberty and security.

We also learned, or re-learned, how much government matters, that there is no substitute for public service and no alternative to people who deliver the services that societies need - from soldiers to firemen and police, from family service providers and public health officials to diplomats and public servants, from politicians to statesmen and women.

On September 11, we got our first glimpse of a new world order, of potential new alignments in international relations, of new priorities and possibilities of new imperatives

and constraints, of new ways that we need to work together.

We understand more clearly today than we did September 10 that there are limits to unilateralism, that there is no alternative to multilateral cooperation to achieve global objectives.

We learned that, warts and all, and there are many warts, we all need the United Nations to be part of the solution.

Perhaps, before I go any further I should say a word or two about the UN.

What is it anyway?

This question is no mere rhetorical flourish, especially at a time when expectations of the UN are so high - on Afghanistan and on terrorism.

It is an important question with a complex answer.

Effectively, to paraphrase the old Pogo comic script character, "It is us".

The UN is its members, with their weaknesses and strengths, their values and demands, neither better nor worse.

What the UN is not is as important as what it is.

It is not a world government.

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

And the General Assembly is only a facsimile of a world parliament.

The Secretary General is not a Head of State.

Very often commentators attribute powers to the Secretary General that he must only wish he had.

(It was not an accident that the office was not called President.)

He presides over the Secretariat, not the member states.

His 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.

What the UN is is a forum where more or less independent states come together to debate the major issues of the day, weigh the advice of the Secretary General, consider what they can do corporately to make the world a better place and, on good days, decide to do it.

In between the good days are many frustrating, fractious days when the body's 189 members cannot find agreement on the way ahead.

Cooperation on General Assembly decisions is voluntary, although the great corpus of resolutions and decisions over time shape customary international law.

The Security Council, however, does have executive powers.

When the Security Council exercises its authority to maintain international peace and security, its decisions are binding on all UN members.

You might remember the far-reaching decision on terrorism the Council made in September.

That decision requires all member governments to act to block funding for terrorism and to deny safe haven to terrorists.

It is the most far-reaching Security Council resolution perhaps ever, and I will return to it at the end of my presentation.

On October 12, the United Nations and Secretary General Kofi Annan were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

(Clearly, Mr. Annan has more personal qualities than most of his predecessors.)

The two dates - September 11 and October 12 - and the two events, the attack on New York and Washington and the Nobel Prize award, are linked.

The award was a recognition of past UN accomplishments but it was also an investment in future UN action.

This is the ninth time that the United Nations has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize - and that is not counting Lester B. Pearson's award for conceiving and despatching the first peace-keeping mission to Suez in 1956.

It is not surprising that the UN has won so many awards in past years.

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 an international organization can prevent war and maintain peace.
  
- **Independence** - the idea that all states are sovereign and equal and most effective instruments to give expression to the will of their own peoples.
  
- **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 individual, political and economic rights.
  
- **Development** - the idea that economic and social policies intelligently pursued can transcend poverty and improve the welfare and living standards of all peoples.
  
- **Environmental Protection** - the idea that acting collectively, nations can resolve and prevent transboundary environmental issues and protect the world's commons for future generations.

Each of these ideas, while not original or exclusive to the UN, has been given remarkable impetus and legitimization by our one universal organization.

And the next big idea may well be **Terrorism** - how the world is going to come to grips with this cancer on the international body politic - about which I will say more later.

When I took on this job, I promised myself that I would be Canada's Ambassador to the United Nations, not the UN's Ambassador to Canada and that I would "call them the way I saw them".

I would be neither a cynic, who only saw inadequacies, nor an apologist, who could forgive any failing.

So, on an evening on which I will sing the UN's praises, I do wish to acknowledge that there have been frustrations, setbacks and worse, failures.

Under frustrations, there are the annual wrangles over the Middle East.

The World Conference on Racism in Durban was a setback; it did great harm to the UN's reputation; it is an experience that should never be repeated.

Much worse were the betrayal of the safe areas of Sebrenica and the genocide of Rwanda.

These were catastrophic failures of the international community; they are indelible marks on the UN's record – and on its soul.

It is no credit to the UN Security Council that it took a full six years to acknowledge its failures in Rwanda.

But – At Canada's prodding – it more or less did finally do so.

## Peace Operations

Without diminishing the failures, fairness requires that I acknowledge also its successes too.

For example, UN military operations.

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a quantum leap in UN military missions.

Between 1991 and 1996 alone, 24 operations were established.

At the peak of this activity, over 80,000 UN peacekeepers were deployed.

Today, there are over 47,000 UN peacekeepers deployed on 15 peace operations worldwide; there are roughly 60,000 more troops in the Balkans deployed under the NATO flag.

(In terms of the number of soldiers and police serving abroad for the UN, Canada ranks about 32<sup>nd</sup>.)

Many of these missions have been complex, dangerous and difficult missions - where the conflicts are internal, the fighting is on-going and the civilian populations routinely are the targets, part of somebody's battlefield tactics.

Recent successes include East Timor, Ethiopia & Eritrea and Sierra Leone (ultimately).

## Refugees

**Refugees** and displaced persons – people who have fled war, persecution or human rights abuse – have also been an area of particular focus for the UN.

Since 1999, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has run operations assisting 2.6 million refugees in Afghanistan, 1 million in the former Yugoslavia, and literally countless more in Africa.

In Afghanistan, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons is growing.

Many will depend utterly on the efforts of 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 to care for them.

## Independence

The nation state idea was born with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.

By 1945, there were 55 independent countries.

Today, in 2001, there are 191.

The UN was at once the instrument of their independence and, through the Charter, its safeguard.

### International Development

In the area of health, the UN has played a leading role.

UNICEF, for example, has helped reduce mortality rates for children under 5 years of age in developing countries - from 222 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 90 in 2000.

Even in war-torn African countries where the conflicts continue, the UN helps, through “days of tranquillity”, to ensure that children are inoculated against childhood diseases.

The UN has helped to virtually eliminate small pox and polio – (let us hope that bioterrorists do not now bring these scourges back).

The UN, in this case the Secretary General personally, has become the standard barrier for fighting HIV/AIDS worldwide.

Consider the scope of the AIDS tragedy:

- 22 million people have died, three million of them children;
- 13 million children have lost a parent; by 2010, the

- number will be 23 million;
- almost one in 10 sub-Saharan African children will be orphans;
- 15,000 people are being infected every day;
- every day, 1,300 children are born with HIV infection, 90% of them in the world's poorest countries.

In parts of Southern Africa, the infection rate among adults exceeds 25%; in some cases, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death of young adults.

In the worst affected countries, infrastructure, services and productivity are facing total collapse.

Millions of children will have reduced access to education due to the death of teachers and the increased reliance of families on child labour.

AIDS is mocking an entire generation of economic and social development.

In the Caribbean and Central America, 1.8 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

In Asia, the statistics are equally alarming - an estimated 6.4 million people are infected.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the numbers are also growing; in Russia and Ukraine, over 500,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS.

And even in the prosperous West, statistics point to stalled prevention results.

Despite all the fear and pessimism such statistics would justify, the UN believes that the fight against HIV/AIDS can be won.

Even in the least developed African countries, where the government have made the fight a priority, there have been significant positive results, e.g., in Rwanda and Senegal.

This past winter the Secretary General issued a call to action and in June, at the UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS, member countries responded, agreeing to a series of ambitious but realistic and time-bound targets and goals.

Much money will be needed but, thanks in part to the Secretary General's major efforts, an initial \$1.5 billion (US) has already been pledged by governments, (\$250 million US by the American Government and \$150 million Canadian by the Canadian Government), by industry, foundations and private citizens.

### **Human Rights / International Law**

The UN has also been central to the progressive development of international law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights 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 conventions and treaties that have come of this work are legally bound to follow them.

The development of human rights law has also been the motive force for international conferences and special sessions, such as:

- the Beijing Conference on Women,
- the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, and
- the World Summit on Children, as well as the postponed Special Session on Children to which I will return.

All of these conferences establish human rights norms to which members aspire and for which the international community holds one another accountable.

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

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 will try those individuals responsible for the atrocities of the ten-year long civil war in the country.

The International Criminal Court, 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, eventually we hope, terrorism.

## Environmental Protection

From the Stockholm Conference in 1971 to the Rio Conference in 1991 to the Johannesburg Conference this time next year, the UN has become the indispensable body for setting international environmental norms.

In this process, the world community has addressed common issues, such as combatting deforestation and desertification, preserving biodiversity and protecting the marine environment and eliminating persistent organic pollutants.

Within ten years of signing the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, all industrialized countries had ceased production and consumption of most ozone-depleting substances.

Another important step was taken by the 1987 Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development reconciled the seemingly incompatible ideas of economic growth and environmental protection with its concept of sustainable development.