

Under UN auspices, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and subsequently with its Kyoto Protocol were negotiated.

### UN SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

When Father Hayes of St. Jeromes and I first discussed my coming here tonight, we both thought I would be able to report on the UN Special Session on Children, which was to have taken place September 19-21 in New York.

It was immediately clear, on September 11, that it would have been inappropriate and impractical to hold a UN meeting involving more than 70 heads of state and government and large numbers of children and youth in a city where the immediate priority had to be the rescue and recovery operation.

So the session had to be postponed; we expect the Special Session will be held in the spring of next year.

Why hold a special session on children?

Because more can be done through norms building than might be thought.

In 1989, member states agreed on a new international convention on the rights of the child.

For the first time, the international community gave itself a binding treaty specifically to protect the rights of children.

That new Convention on the Rights of the Child entered into force in record time, in less than a year later, and has now been ratified by almost every state in the world, 187, more than any other treaty.

The Convention enshrined rights specifically applicable to children, including protecting the rights to life, health, education, and to participation (in decisions on matters affecting them).

It also established the principle that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all matters affecting children.

But codifying rights is one thing, exercising them is another.

After the Convention entered into force, more than 181 heads of state and government and other world leaders came together under Canada's co-chairmanship, at the First World Summit for Children in 1990 to commit themselves to implement the Convention.

Leaders at the Summit agreed that the best way to improve the lives of the world's children was for states to

protect children's rights and to help children to realize them.

The World Summit issued a Declaration and an Action Plan containing specific goals to be achieved by the year 2000 to improve the lives of children.

Since 1990, the UN, particularly UNICEF, has lead global efforts to improve school attendance and literacy.

There has been progress.

Between 1990 and 1998, gross enrollment ratios for primary school, world wide, rose from 48% to 78%; for girls from 38% to 68%.

Overall enrollment now stands at 82%

In many regions, particularly East Asia, parts of Latin America and the Caribbean full universal primary school enrollment has nearly been reached.

Moreover, the primary school enrolment gap between girls and boys has narrowed globally.

The UN has been instrumental in getting more and more females into classrooms worldwide, particularly young girls.

Since the 1990 Summit and the entry into force of the Convention, other significant progress has been made.

For example, two optional protocols have been agreed, one addressing the sexual exploitation of children and the other, on child soldiers, raised the ages of recruitment and deployment.

New standards have been set on child labour by International Labour Organization in its Convention 182.

More than three-quarters of all the world's children have been immunized against the six preventable childhood diseases.

Progress has been made against iodine deficiency disorders.

However, while there has been real progress in many areas, much work remains to be done.

Each year 12 million children around the world still die from preventable diseases (diarrhoea, measles, respiratory infections, malaria) or malnutrition.

A child in Sub-Saharan Africa has a one in 10 chance of dying before reaching its first birthday, and a one in five chance of not seeing its fifth birthday.

More than 90% of these deaths are preventable through simple-cost effective interventions.

Today, three million lives are saved each year because of immunization programs.

The cost of saving these lives?

\$1.50 per child for the vaccines plus about \$13 per child to deliver the vaccines to some of the least accessible places on earth.

In the past decade armed conflicts have killed more than 2 million boys and girls, five million have become physically disabled and millions more have been traumatized by the violence.

Millions of children still suffer from malnutrition.

For example, 28 million children remain at risk of iodine deficiency.

Over 300 million children are currently working, not studying, many of them in dangerous and exploitative circumstances.

Women, and girls, face particular challenges.

For example, approximately 600,000 women and girls die annually during pregnancy or childbirth.

Nearly 146,000 of them are teenage girls.

600 million children cannot read or write and of the more than 110 million children out of school, the majority are girls;

At least one in three women and girls worldwide has been beaten or sexually abused in her lifetime.

Women and girls are especially vulnerable to violence, including sexual violence, by police, military and others during complex emergencies and armed conflict.

Despite advances in education, in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, millions of children are not in school.

Two-thirds of them are girls.

A goal of the UN's Special Session will be to agree on strategies to achieve universal quality primary education for all children by the year 2015; and the elimination of gender disparities in education by the year 2005.

The UN Special Session on Children will play an essential role in addressing the urgent tasks that remain to implement the rights of the child.

The Special Session will agree on a set of new commitments and a global agenda for the world's children for the next decade.

Canadian priorities for the special session include protecting the rights of especially vulnerable children and children in especially difficult circumstances, such as disabled children, children affected by violence, children affected by armed conflict, refugee and internally displaced children, exploited child labourers, children who are sexually exploited or trafficked, and minority and indigenous children.



## Terrorism

Earlier, I said that giving the Nobel Price to the UN was an investment in the future.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee presumably understood that the UN can use all the standing it can get.

It faces two of the most difficult, perhaps the most difficult, challenges ever – re-building the failed state of Afghanistan and defeating international terrorism.

Worse, the two challenges are intimately linked.

The Secretary-General and his senior staff are only too aware of the enormous difficulties they face.

And of the great harm that can come to the organization if the enormous expectations invested in the Organization are fulfilled.

The UN must succeed in re-building a country that has been at war with itself and others for two generations, at least.

It must find a way to sustain several million refugees and internally displaced people in the middle of a war.

It must find the wherewithal – literally billions of dollars – for physical reconstruction of an infrastructure that was already in ruins before the bombing even began.

It must find a way to bring into being and to support an administration that acknowledges ethnic divisions without fuelling them.

It must make a start in re-establishing the rights of women in an atmosphere that to date has been hostile in the extreme to them.

It must bring stability and security to a country most easily united by the prospect of expelling foreigners.

If the UN does not succeed, Afghanistan will remain a failed state and a haven for Islamic extremist terrorists.

Afghanistan is not the only failed state; there are others notably Somalia, where chaos provides the ideal conditions for terrorism to prosper.

And that is the second enormous challenge facing the United Nations – working with the United States, Canada and others to reverse the growing scourge of terrorism.

It is going to be a long war, and a new war, in effect, a war against an abstraction with no fixed (national) address.

Given the stakes, we need to be absolutely clear about what the UN can and cannot do.

What the UN can do, and will do, is lead the effort to suffocate terrorism, using legal political and economic instrument.

A lot has already been done to build the legal framework to fight terrorism.

The UN General Assembly has passed 12 separate conventions and is working on a thirteenth and possible eventually a fourteenth.

These conventions are rather specific, covering such issues as high-jacking, hostage-taking and explosives-marking, so bomb material can be traced.

Canada has already ratified and implemented the first 10 conventions.

We will ratify the remaining two as soon as the Government's Anti-terrorism Act is passed by Parliament.

Those two conventions are intended to stop the

financing of terrorism and the access of terrorists to bomb-making material.

And Canada is playing a leading role in the General Assembly's negotiations of the 13<sup>th</sup> anti-terrorism agreement that will, if adopted, fill in some of the gaps between existing conventions.

Outstanding issues remain the definition of terrorism and exemptions from prosecution for terrorism of military forces and freedom fighters resisting foreign occupation.

Needless to say these are major hurdles and it is not clear that even with the stimulus of September 11, the General Assembly will be able to reach agreement.

Equally important is the resolution passed a couple of weeks ago by the UN Security Council.

The Government of Canada has commended the Security Council for the outstanding work it has done in Resolution 1373.

The wide range of action prescribed in that resolution – from denying financing and safe haven to encouraging compliance and implementation – will take the fight to the terrorists.

We particularly applaud the decision of the Council to establish a committee to monitor the implementation of the resolution and the call for States parties to report on actions taken in accordance with this resolution.

What monitoring mechanism on compliance with international obligations ensure is that commitments are matched by action, that words are matched by deeds.

States that are genuine in their pledges to fight terrorism need not fear the oversight of their peers.

Canada is already largely in compliance with resolution 1373.

We have promulgated regulations under Canada's United Nations act to implement key provisions of the resolution, including prohibiting financing and fundraising for, as well as freezing the assets of, terrorists.

The government has also introduced legislation, the Anti-Terrorism Act, into Parliament that should put Canada into full compliance with the remaining provisions of the resolution.

We have also offered to help those countries who might need technical assistance in drawing up their own legislation, as we have done for those who needed help in giving legislative effect to the undertakings they have made with

respect to the International Criminal Court.

Further, the United Nations Charter provides the basic international legal framework within which countries have the right to self-protection or the right to respond to attack.

The day after the attacks, for example, the United States availed itself of Article 51 of the UN Charter – stating that any military action would be covered by this provision for self-defence.

Canada has similarly notified the Security Council President that we were taking measures under Article 51 of the Charter in our own defence.

I do not believe that we will see a UN-led military operation.

Rather, we are more likely to see the continuation of the coalition of the willing.

For one thing, military action in self-defence does not need a UN mandate or even UN blessing.

For another, there are limits to the UN's ability to mount complex and dangerous military missions.

In my view, and the Canadian Government's view, such missions are necessary.

Success against terrorists requires cooperative and coordinated action.

To succeed, we need an active and forward defence because in this age of weapons of mass destruction, we cannot wait for them to come to us.

We must take the fight to the terrorists.

We must keep them on the defensive, without safe haven or succour.

Combining a good domestic defence with an active offence is the only way nations of the world will be able to exercise effectively their right to self defence and to restore an acceptable measure of security.

Moreover, open democratic societies cannot indefinitely defend every power plant, pipeline, government building, etc.

Over the long haul, the world community's efforts, including the UN's programs, to promote economic and social development and good governance will clear the undergrowth of

discontent in which terrorists can hide and plan and recruit accomplices.

## Conclusions

The world changed September 11.

Among the things that changed was the role of the UN.

The fight against terrorism now joins peace-keeping, economic development, human rights and the environment as major UN preoccupations.

The UN has been given a make or break opportunity.

If it is able to surmount its ideological and political conflicts and diplomatic gamesmanship, it will give itself new life.

But if it retreats into its familiar bickering and lowest common denominator politics, we will see yet another nail driven into its coffin.

Canada will work to make the UN succeed.

Because we genuinely believe United Nations, warts and all, is making the world a better place.

Thank you.



