

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Marc-André Blanchard,
at the General Debate
of the 73rd session of the General Assembly**

1 October 2018

Together, through uncharted territory

Canada is honoured to help close this General Debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Let me start with a simple question. Why does the UN matter? The answer is also simple.

The magnitude of the contemporary challenges the world is confronting, from climate change to terrorism, from economic inequality to irregular migration, from protracted crises to humanitarian emergencies, demands action.

Each of these challenges is systemic. None can be solved by countries acting in isolation or bilaterally. All of them require the world to work together.

The UN is the only place where we all come together to tackle these challenges.

Indeed, this UN General Assembly – our Assembly – is the only forum where representation is global.

This representation not only bestows legitimacy, it affords opportunities to harness diversity of thought and experience, of skills and knowledge, and of ideas, in support of better outcomes for all.

Since the beginning of the postwar project, Canada has been at the heart of the UN. A Canadian, John Peters Humphrey was

among the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We were at the advent of peacekeeping.

We helped to build the institutions at the core of the rules-based international order. But these rules and institutions were not, and should not be, static entities, impervious to change.

Notwithstanding their tremendous achievements, we should acknowledge that the benefits of these rules and institutions have not been evenly distributed.

Too many remain excluded, economically, socially and politically, from the decision-making that affects their lives.

The “greatest generation” that came out of the ashes of the Second World War was great not because times were simpler, or the challenges less complex.

They were great because they found a way to work together, in common cause for collective outcomes. Their work helped to ensure stability and relative peace and security for over 70 years.

We owe it to them, and to us, to continue to work together to make our multilateral world order more efficient, fairer and more inclusive.

That is why supporting the implementation of the current UN reforms led by our Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, is so essential.

Together, to make multilateralism work for everyone.

Agenda 2030 is a phenomenal achievement of the United Nations. For the first time in history, we agreed on a comprehensive strategic plan to achieve a sustainable world.

The plan brings us to uncharted territory. Sticking to old approaches will not help us meet its targets.

We ought to find new ways of doing things, for silos to be broken between governments and civil society, between governments and the private sector, between north and south; between the traditional so called like-minded and non-traditional like-minded.

We ought to do things differently at the UN and in our governments to better deliver results for people on the ground.

We ought to hold fresh, frank and inclusive discussions.

We ought to develop a greater sense of urgency.

We ought to reconsider our approach to risk. Inaction is a risk for governments and people, but also for investors.

We ought to identify the opportunities in our challenges.

We ought to look at new partnerships to harness new opportunities.

As our Secretary General says: “Climate change is the defining issue of our time.”

A significant component of the response to climate change is new, greener and more resilient infrastructure. This represents a 26 trillion-dollar opportunity for us all.

To harness this opportunity, starting with the most vulnerable, small island states, we must all work together with scientists, multilateral institutions, regional banks, investors, and civil society like never before.

Not building essential infrastructure is not an option. As Prime Minister Trudeau said in this very Assembly: “Developing countries should not be punished for a problem they did not create, nor should they be deprived the opportunities for clean growth that developed nations are now pursuing.”

And we should all support Africa as it works to create opportunities for its youth and meet the ambitions of its Agenda

2030 through greater economic integration and prosperity. Doing so is key to a more secure world.

Greater, and more shared, prosperity leads to greater peace.

Bringing people together is at the heart of Canada's national identity. In Canada, we have come to understand that diversity is our strength.

Indigenous peoples in Canada are the bedrock of our diversity. They speak more than 60 different languages. Their cultures are some of the richest on the continent.

One in every five Canadians was born outside of the country. Our largest urban centres are among the most cosmopolitan on earth. Over 50% of the populations of both Vancouver and Toronto were born outside Canada.

Canada has become home to refugees and new Canadians for decades. While we are very proud to have welcomed over 50 000 Syrian refugees over the last three years, we are fully aware that many countries have also shown great leadership in welcoming many more.

I must say, one of the things that makes me very proud is that 40% of the Syrian refugees we have welcomed – some 20,000 people – have been directly sponsored by private citizens who choose to personally contribute.

Of course, our track record on promoting economic and social integration will always require work and action. While we have had important successes, we have made mistakes and still face challenges – the most important of which remains reconciliation with First Nations.

In Canada, we understand that we need to listen and to learn in order to contribute to better outcomes. It is what we do; both at home and abroad.

Together, to break down barriers and connect people to opportunity

We are using our G7 presidency this year both to listen as well as to learn from others, but also to innovate and break down silos.

For the first time, to ensure that governments were delivering in a more cohesive manner, Canada convened ministers of Finance and ministers of International Development together to explore new ways of financing development.

We can't afford anymore to have discussions at the UN that are distinct from those at the World Bank or the IMF.

We also felt very strongly that the G7 needed to tackle the issue of climate resilience and disaster recovery. While Canada has its own extensive coast lines and borders on three oceans, we invited small island, coastal African, and southeast Asian states to this critical conversation.

Building on the UN Oceans Conference, this discussion produced a charter seeking to ban the use of plastics in our oceans, and is paving the way to the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi this year that Canada is proud to be co-hosting with Kenya.

We partnered with the World Bank and others to raise close to \$3.8 billion to reduce the barriers that women and girls face in accessing education in conflict and fragile states. Their inclusion will lead to exceptional benefits for their communities, and by extension, for the world.

We also need capital that flows faster and at scale in emerging and frontier markets.

For this reason, we are also working together with partners from across the United Nations and the private sector to unlock the capital that will connect people to opportunities.

As a direct result of the work we do here at the UN, just a few days ago at the high-level meeting on financing the SDGs, Prime Minister Trudeau announced the establishment of a Toronto affiliate of the Global Infrastructure Hub to do precisely that: leverage Canadian expertise in infrastructure to help connect capital to projects.

These projects fuel long-term economic growth and support the transition to a low-carbon economy while making progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and improving the representation of women and marginalized groups in sustainable infrastructure.

Together, for enduring Peace and Security

Our commitment to multilateralism – notably UN peacekeeping – includes a commitment to renewal and reform, a commitment to make the system our grandparents built fit for purpose in the 21st century.

Canada is proud to have increased its contribution to UN Peacekeeping operations and to have adopted smart pledging – sending the people and equipment that are most needed to the places where they are most useful.

Canada is spearheading the Elsie Initiative – a practical plan to act on our shared promise to double the number of women in peacekeeping operations. We set that as a goal, first and foremost, because of our shared belief in the fundamental equal rights of women.

We also know that having women in the ranks – and in charge – makes peacekeeping more effective and its results more durable. We look forward to working with our new partners, Ghana and Zambia, to better recruit, train, retain and promote women across all of our police and military forces.

For the international rules-based order to work for all, the rules need to apply to all.

Accountability cannot be a luxury afforded only when circumstances allow.

As is the case everywhere, Canada's actions in Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela are guided by an unequivocal commitment to protecting and promoting human rights.

The crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya of Myanmar, including the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, are utterly unacceptable.

Canada's parliament unanimously adopted a motion naming these crimes as genocide and urging the Security Council to refer these appalling acts to the ICC. The plight of the Rohingya people demands a response.

Canada is appalled by crimes the Assad regime in Syria has committed against its own people, including most horrifically the use of banned chemical weapons. Syrians rightly demand accountability and hope for an enduring political solution.

The White Helmets, many of whom gathered evidence of chemical weapon attacks at risk of death, rightly expect our support in seeking justice.

In Canada's own hemisphere, an OAS panel of independent international experts carefully documented many of the crimes being committed by the Maduro regime against its own people.

Here too, Venezuelans hope for accountability. For this reason, we and our regional partners took the exceptional step of referring this case to the ICC.

The ongoing illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea is a clear breach of international law. Respect for state sovereignty

and territorial integrity are not mere notions; they are the foundations of the UN charter. Russia's destabilizing actions cannot be allowed to stand.

Our determination to ensure accountability in Myanmar, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela is accompanied by a deep commitment to improve the humanitarian situation for the millions affected, both within those countries as well as across those regions.

We recognize that the disproportionate share of the responsibility for providing lifesaving support to so many has fallen on neighboring countries, and pledge to continue our support for them as well.

And we will continue to contribute to the work of the United Nations in addressing these challenges.

Canada's candidacy for the United Nations Security Council (2021-22)

When the international rules-based order was designed, this Assembly mandated the Security Council to authorize the use of force, to keep the peace, and to keep us safe.

Seventy years later, that remains its core responsibility.

The Security Council's agenda is replete with persistent and emerging challenges.

Some security threats we know all too well; others are emerging, and others still we have yet to anticipate. But all are systemic and require collective responses.

Be they old or new, these threats will continue to test the Security Council's ability to adapt and respond.

That is why Canada is seeking a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 2021-2022. We are confident that we can contribute to effective, carefully considered global responses

We have a proven record of working with other member states to bring fresh ideas and innovative approaches to tackle complex problems, from peacekeeping and policing to peacebuilding and transitions.

We are confident that we can harness the diversity of ideas and experience necessary to fashion forward-looking approaches that can work.

After all, bringing people together is our calling card. A capacity for cooperation defines our national character. Inclusion is part of our identity.

When Canada has served on the UN Security Council, we have done so inclusively.

We brought other states and civil society into the conversation. We championed the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Human Security. We fought for the protection of civilians caught in the crossfire of armed conflict.

If elected to the Security Council, we will bring to bear our longstanding dedication to peacekeeping, our over thirty years of service as Chair of the UN's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and our active membership on the Peacebuilding Commission.

If elected, we will work with others to tackle climate change and violent extremism, and to promote economic security and the empowerment of women and girls.

We will champion inclusion and accountability, openness and transparency, in all of the UN Security Council's deliberations.

We will help to find solutions to build a safer, fairer, and more secure world, where the benefits of the international rules-based order are distributed more evenly.

We are confident that the institutions we have spent more than seven decades building can be renewed and revitalized.

But we can only do this effectively, if we do it together.

Thank you. Merci.