

# Canada

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**STATEMENT BY**

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN  
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

**TO**

**THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**ALLOCUTION DU**

**TRÈS HONORABLE PAUL MARTIN  
PREMIER MINISTRE DU CANADA**

**LORS DE LA**

**QUINZIÈME SESSION DE**



**L'ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE DES NATIONS UNIES**

Mr. President, I want to talk today about UN reform, particularly about the way we should serve and the way we do business if the United Nations is to play the role we want it to, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The world is organized into independent states, and the primary obligation of the governments is to look after their own people. This presents us with a fundamental dilemma. For unless we also act collectively on the basis of our common humanity, the rich will become richer, the poor will become poorer, and hundreds of millions of people will be at risk. Thus we need institutions whose primary obligation is to our common humanity.

Herein lies the importance of the United Nations. It comprises member-states, but its mission is indeed to serve the world's peoples. Its charter makes this very clear: and I quote: "we, the peoples of the United Nations (are) determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women".

international community struggles with definitions, the people of Darfur continue to suffer. They are hungry, they are homeless, they are sick and many have been driven out of their own country. Tens of thousands have been murdered, raped and assaulted. War crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed.

We must not let debates about definitions become obstacles to action. We should not have to go through such painful debates to figure out how to respond to humanitarian catastrophe. We need clear principles that will allow the international

international community judges that civilian populations face extreme threats; for exploring non-military and, if necessary, proportionate military options to protect civilians. The responsibility to protect is not a license for intervention; it is an international guarantor of political accountability.

The second area is the "Responsibility to Deny"; it encompasses the need to ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not spread to states or terrorists prepared to use them under any circumstances, and especially against innocent



only a fleeting effect if a country does not have functioning public institutions. We must build countries' governance capacities and take the time to do it right. The same is true for economic institutions. Those that work well marshal the creative energies of local entrepreneurs.

That is the message of the UN Commission on the Private Sector and Development: a thriving economy is the product of citizens' trust in their country's public institutions. In a nutshell, development depends on governance.

Lastly, there is responsibility for the future, which is to say the obligation we have to leave a better world for our children. This is no small challenge. It involves all aspects of our common heritage — health, the environment, oceans, space.

The new pandemics demand our most urgent attention. AIDS, SARS and the Ebola virus are sounding a terrifying alarm. But scientists are predicting even worse diseases. The World Health Organization must bolster its surveillance systems. It must do a better job coordinating its actions with those of other UN bodies.

Beyond health issues lies the whole question of managing our environment. It is gravely threatened. Only international cooperation and technical assistance can bring lasting solutions to such problems as access to clean air and water.

Furthermore, we need an oceans policy that allows us to rebuild our fish stocks. But access to fisheries must be better regulated under international law. Simply put, the pillage of these global resources must stop.

Space is our final frontier. It has always captured our imagination. What a tragedy it would be if space became one big weapons arsenal and the scene of a new arms race.

In 1967, the United Nations agreed that weapons of mass destruction must not be based in space. The time has come to extend this ban to all weapons.

Mr. President, I have talked today about responsibilities; let me mention one more—the responsibility to act.

We await the report of the Secretary General's High Level Panel, and we anticipate substantial recommendations for reform. Many countries are focused on

Security Council reform. We should support reforms that will make the Security Council more effective, and will permit those countries who actively support UN peacekeeping, development and other activities, to continue to have a meaningful opportunity to serve.

But we also look forward to recommendations that go well beyond the Security Council. For example, the need to set out measures to facilitate an integrated response to the diverse range of security challenges we face from the proliferation of terrorism to improving UN coordination on development, health, and environment. As individual countries, as members of regional organizations, as participants in various international groups that form around specific interests, we all must act to bridge the differences that divide us and forge an international consensus for reform of the United Nations.

In another context, for instance, Canada has proposed a special meeting where leaders from 20 or so countries in the developed and developing world would get together to discuss our collective challenges and responsibilities. This could very well include providing a major boost to UN reform efforts.

In any event, no matter how you come at it, the time has come for real reform of the United Nations. We must put aside narrow interests and work to common purpose to strengthen this universal institution, whose activities give force to our common humanity.

Four years ago, at the Millennium Summit, the leaders of the world agreed and I quote that "we have a duty...to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable...". That duty will not be discharged, unless we, as governments speak to the dignity and freedom of every human being on earth, here at the world's meeting place of nations.

Thank you.