

**Security Council Open Debate on the Maintenance of International Peace and Security: War, its lessons, and the search for a permanent peace, 29th January 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Bonser, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations*

Let me start by commending you, Mr. President, for breaking the usual mould in convening this debate, which raises important questions about the role of justice, reconciliation and historical memory in achieving lasting peace.

This debate is also taking place at an opportune time. Over the past 20 years, we have witnessed a consolidation of democracies, both in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the western hemisphere, with major benefits for both regions. Since late 2010, we have seen populations throughout the Middle East express their desire for more freedom, more justice, more accountability and more transparency from their political leaders.

*(spoke in French)*

In Canada's view, that experience illustrates the need to recognize our collective human dignity. To live together in peace, we must recognize the fact that dignity cannot be made conditional or compartmentalized and that we cannot protect some human rights and freedoms and choose to not respect others. That recognition is the very foundation of thriving democratic societies. It reflects their determination to manage differences by fighting oppression and discrimination. It informs their commitment to respecting every individual's freedom of conscience, belief and worship. These values are at the very heart of Canada's principled foreign policy. That policy is dedicated to peace, prosperity, and freedom. Adopting such an approach entails several commitments.

*(spoke in English)*

Respecting human dignity demands a commitment to act. Canada is dedicated to preventing and halting genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Indeed, every State should have a solemn duty to defend the most vulnerable, challenge aggressors, protect human rights and promote human dignity, both at home and abroad. Societies that encourage respect for diversity, protect religious minorities, fight discrimination, hold perpetrators legally accountable, resolve political differences democratically and seek reconciliation are much less likely to suffer atrocities. Good governance, the rule of law and human rights matter.

The long history of humankind has shown that religious freedom and democratic freedom are inseparable. Where democracy has been overthrown, the spirit of free worship has also often vanished. Societies that protect religious freedom are more likely to protect all other fundamental freedoms. They are typically more stable and prosperous societies. They are just societies.

It is essential that we not forget those most affected by conflict. A commitment to peace requires a commitment to the protection and empowerment of all members of a society, especially women and girls. A society's development is inextricably tied to the engagement and leadership of women. Peace cannot exist when the rights of half of the population are compromised. Peace cannot exist when the rights of women are compromised. Given access to resources, tools and opportunities, women are drivers of post-conflict reconciliation and recovery; when not, they are the greatest victims. A commitment to freedom and dignity requires the empowerment of all citizens. It is only by strengthening the rights of women that a country will achieve greater security and, in turn, greater prosperity.

Respecting human dignity demands a commitment to learning from the past. In 2013, Canada chaired the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, whose 31 member States are committed to the implementation of national and international policies and programmes in support of

Holocaust education, remembrance and research. The Government of Canada believes that such work is critically important to helping to prevent future acts of genocide.

Canada has noted with great interest Jordan's emphasis on the importance of securing and making available the national archives of documents of States in order to address reconciliation in a post-conflict environment. Those archives can also play a role in holding to account those who have perpetrated the most serious crimes.

Canada notes that UNESCO has programmes dealing with the protection and preservation of national archives. Its Memory of the World programme, established in 1992, was born out of a growing awareness of the preservation of and access to documentary heritage to ensure that critical documents are not lost or destroyed during war and social upheaval. Perhaps one outcome of today's discussion might be the renewed attention of the international community to that work.

Finally, respecting human dignity requires a commitment to prevention. The United Nations system and its intergovernmental bodies have a long history of working together to prevent, contain and manage conflict. Canada supports strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in that area so as to move from reaction to prevention. Conflict prevention is as important as an effective response. Political, humanitarian, security and development resources and tools must be brought to bear more effectively in order to strengthen national capacities for conflict prevention. By doing that, we can preserve human dignity and protect the lives and rights of the innocent.