

Global

Carney should push the Pact for the Future at UN, and a path to a 'brighter future for all of humanity'



Prime Minister Mark Carney scrums with reporters as he leaves the Métis Major Projects Summit in Ottawa on Aug. 7, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Pact for the Future calls for addressing the root causes of conflicts and accelerating commitments on human rights. Most importantly, it brings into sharp focus the need for recommitment to international co-operation based on respect for international law.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—Prime Minister Carney, please go to the

United Nations General Assembly in New York in September and speak about what Canada will do to help build the conditions for peace in today's fractured and very dangerous world. So far in your tenure, you have talked about preparing Canadians for war. That isn't good enough.

You've got tons of problems coming at you, largely generated by the mendacious, rapacious, and wholly unpredictable United States President Donald Trump, and I know you must stay focused on the tariff issue to protect this country's economy. The way to stand up to Trump is to have Canada stand up in the world for the full application of international law, and the place to do it is the green podium of the UN General Assembly with the eyes of the world on you.

I am not suggesting here that one speech can save us from Trump's machinations or turn the world around. Of course, Canada cannot reach beyond its middle-power strength. But the voice of Canada—your voice—can lift up a frightened country and international community which will see you providing leadership to a world weighed down by wars, unspeakable human suffering, and climate disasters.

Your speech at the UN would give a sense of direction to the

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audience at home as well as the international community that has always retained a respect for Canada despite our poor international performance in latter years, especially in peacekeeping and aid assistance.

The assembly this fall will undoubtedly be riveted on how to advance the immediacy of full recognition of the State of Palestine and an end to the Gaza war. This is the place to spell out clearly how Canada would implement its commitment to the recognition of Palestine in a way that does not challenge the continued existence and security of Israel. Speak to this, yes, but speak also about the main issue that bedevils the world today: the rearming of nations that have lost confidence in the processes of law and order established by the UN.

The interests of Canada and the world are joined in recovering respect for international law. Over the years, the UN has produced a body of law of unprecedented proportions: one has only to look at the growth of human rights, the condemnation of nuclear weapons, and the protection of the planet from global warming to grasp the scale of UN activity. However, the laws emanating from the UN are dependent on the major states to accept them.

Canada has always supported international law, including the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, and the Geneva Conventions. Come now to their defence at this moment of world peril.

From the rostrum of the General Assembly, you can speak about what your government is doing and will do to implement “The Pact for the Future,” a UN document Canada signed onto last year, which charts “a path to a brighter future for all of humanity.”

The pact includes a pledge to move faster towards achieving the sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement commitments on climate change. It calls for addressing the root causes of conflicts and accelerating pledges on human rights. Most importantly, it brings into sharp focus the need for recommitment to international co-operation based on respect for international law.

I respectfully put it to you, prime minister: Canadians need to hear about the pact because it provides a way for our country to regain its integrity as a peace-building nation, an integrity which your government is currently sidestepping with its concentration on military spending at the expense of meeting economic and social development needs both at home and abroad.

Your government moved with alacrity to promise to devote five per cent of GDP to defence spending on the unproved assumption a stronger military will bring peace. The experience of the past 80 years, since the end of Second World War, has proved that assumption false. What brings peace is strengthening the rule of law. The undermining of law is at the root of today's chaos.

The Pact for the Future cannot by itself solve problems, let alone enforce solutions, but without at least a map to guide peoples forward to a safer world, humanity would be even more lost than it is in today's conflicted atmosphere. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948, was at first only a document, but combinations of like-minded governments and an active civil society breathed life into it. The Universal Declaration lived because it is an ethical statement of life. So, too, is the Pact for the Future.

Prime minister, you have an opportunity to raise Canada against Trump's game. Unify us as you lift up Canada's hopes and aspirations in a bewildered world. Strengthen us at home by showing the world that this country has the courage to creatively respond to global threats. Start a dialogue with people across Canada and across the nations.

With the weight of Canada's strong support for the UN for 80 years, go to the UN microphone, sir. And speak.

Former Senator Douglas Roche's latest book is *Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-free World* (Amazon).

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