

Remarks by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.**Canadian Club of Edmonton****Dec. 13, 2023**

It is an honour to address the Canadian Club of Edmonton. Your rich history shows your constant dedication to a unified and strengthened Canada.

How can we find hope for peace in the darkness of the wars that engulf us today? That question torments many, and it is especially poignant as we approach the Christmas season. It's hard to sing when we want to cry.

Let's step back for a moment and recall that a few days ago, we observed the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: we did this in the midst of devastating wars in the world today.. We must see the direct linkage between human rights and war. War is the enemy of human rights. And if we would advance human rights, we must end war.

The world faces no greater challenge today than the challenge to end its relentless march to war. War causes starvation, deepens poverty, ruins environments, forces migrations of peoples, wrecks the rule of law, multiplies the gap between rich and poor, and causes prolonged misery for the most vulnerable people. Though these world problems are rooted in a host of actors, none can be resolved adequately unless we end the dominance of the culture of war.

That is why the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, recently published “A New Agenda for Peace,” which addresses a myriad of challenges the international community faces today. He sets out a comprehensive approach to prevention, linking peace, sustainable development, climate action and food security. Guterres says that in order to protect and manage the global public good of peace, we need a peace continuum based on a better understanding of the underlying drivers of conflict, a renewed effort to agree on more effective collective security responses, and a meaningful set of steps to manage emerging risks. This is a holistic approach to peace.

The New Agenda for Peace is buttressed by a new effort made by nations attending, in September, the U.N. Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 development goals have a 2030 target to eliminate the worst forms of poverty, but that target now seems out of reach. The 2023 SDG Summit was a rallying call for action to regain the lost ground on the SDGs from the twin blows of the pandemic and ongoing wars. The summit was designed to reinvigorate the sense of hope, optimism and enthusiasm that characterized the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. Canada, which has to date provided \$33.5 billion to the SDGs, is doing its part.

Also, the climate crisis of global warming is a security issue because higher temperatures lead to famines and conflict over resources, tragedies in themselves but which then lead to higher refugee rates. The devastating effects of global warming are now felt around the world. The

2023 final report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says it will take a quantum leap in global action to hold global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. The Cop28 meeting, which ended today, made modest progress.

These three crises of war, economic and social development, and global warming are all manifestations of the disregard for human rights shown by multiple governments. And over-arching is the worsening crisis of the possession and modernization of nuclear weapons by nine states.

The United Nations is trying to address all these crises and in so doing, the U.N. has proved itself to be a repository for hope that the world will truly practice full human rights. Yesterday, Canada voted in favour of a U.N. General Assembly resolution demanding “an immediate humanitarian ceasefire” in the Gaza war. We also joined with Australia and New Zealand in issuing a statement condemning Hamas’s terror attacks on Israel Oct. 7; and mourning every Israeli and Palestinian innocent life which has been lost in the conflict. We have also condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

It might seem a contradiction to speak of peace at a time of the scarring tragedies of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Only a burst of cooperation among nations will get the world back on track towards peace. The U.N. is trying to build that cooperation. Its efforts to end the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East are a sign of hope.

The G20, the primary forum for international economic cooperation among the world's leading developed and emerging economies, seems to be getting the message that peace and development go together. Its recent communique proclaimed: “We are one Earth, one family, and we share one future.” The political order is starting to understand our togetherness on the planet. That is certainly a sign of hope, as I write in my new book.

We must be realists for peace. We may be able to save the ecosystem from collapsing, eradicate the worst forms of poverty, and prevent the destruction of huge areas of the planet from nuclear warfare – or we may not. Although human beings have never been so well equipped to determine their own future as at this moment, the challenges to global security – our very survival – are greater than at any time in history. It is the knowledge and the structures for peace already in place that give me hope for the future.

We must recognize the blossoming of intelligence that is the chief characteristic of our time. We are not fated to oblivion. Our world has become a human community interconnected in every sphere of activity. This is an empowering discovery and is capable of energizing the process of building a lasting peace.

