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Note to the Secretary-General

CANADA ELECTION RESULTS

- 21/10/15
1. On 19 October, Canadian voters handed a decisive victory to the Liberal Party, following the election of members of the House of Commons of the 42nd Parliament of Canada. With the Liberals winning a clear majority (184 out of 338 seats), their leader, Justin Trudeau, the son of a well-regarded former Prime Minister, is set to become the new Prime Minister of Canada. His victory marked an upset for Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who had held power since 2006. Mr. Harper's Conservative Party won just 99 seats, a sharp decrease from the 166 that they had secured in the 2011 elections. The three remaining parties in the new House of Commons are the leftist New Democratic Party (NDP) with 44 seats, the Bloc Québécois with ten and the Greens with one. A total of 88 women were elected, which is more than the 76 who won seats in 2011. However, women still only account for 26 per cent of the House of Commons.
  2. The election results have significant implications for the United Nations as well as in other regions far from Canada's borders. Regarding climate change, the official Liberal position, which is shared by many analysts, is that Mr. Harper failed to take sufficient action and thus damaged Canada's international reputation. In that regard, it is worth remembering that Mr. Harper pulled Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2011. By contrast, Mr. Trudeau has pledged to "develop real climate change solutions, consistent with our international obligations". In addition to attending next month's Paris Climate Change Conference, his party has also committed to holding a national meeting within 90 days to establish a pan-Canadian framework for combatting climate change, which would include the creation of national emissions reduction targets.
  3. Another area of interest to the United Nations is support to its <sup>\*</sup>peacekeeping operations. Canada had historically been a strong supporter of and contributor to such operations, and former Canadian Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lester Pearson is considered to be the father of United Nations peacekeeping. However, under Prime Minister Harper, the number of Canadian military and police personnel in United Nations missions dropped from some 350 when he took office in 2006 to just 116 today, meaning that Canada now ranks 68<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of contributions. In contrast to Mr. Harper's documented reluctance to participate in United Nations missions over the past nine years, Mr. Trudeau recently said, "Right now, there is a need to revitalize, focus and support peacekeeping operations around the world". That sentiment, along with the Liberals' traditional pro-peacekeeping track record, would suggest that Mr. Trudeau's victory could herald an increase in Canadian contributions to United Nations peacekeeping.
  4. Outside of Canada, the elections were followed closely in Israel and the Russian Federation. On the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Mr. Harper had established Canada as a staunch Israel supporter. He became the first Canadian Prime Minister to address the Knesset, refused to condemn Israeli settlements and withdrew Canadian funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). He also cut ties with Israel's enemy Iran in 2012. In Moscow, pro-Government media appeared to welcome the loss of Mr. Harper, who had angered Russian President Vladimir Putin by repeatedly condemning Russian actions in Ukraine. Mr. Trudeau has not given any indications that he will radically shift Canadian policies on Israel or Ukraine, but unease on

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pro-Israeli and pro-Ukrainian web sites has been observed. Meanwhile, Mr. Trudeau has pledged to welcome more Syrian refugees and restore relations with Iran.

5. There are many explanations for the Conservatives' heavy losses. One is that the Canadian public was increasingly uncomfortable with Mr. Harper's movement of Canada away from its traditional multilateralist policies, his disengagement from the United Nations and the subsequent diminishing of the country's global standing. The outgoing Canadian Government's attitude toward the United Nations was demonstrated most recently by its decision to send its Deputy Foreign Minister, as opposed to someone more senior, to this year's General Debate. It is evident that Mr. Harper's Government had been losing clout in international bodies, as was seen when Canada lost to Portugal during the 2010 Security Council elections. By contrast, Mr. Trudeau penned an opinion piece last month entitled "The World Needs Canada to be a Meaningful Member of the UN", in which he concluded, "We, as Canadians, will recommit to the United Nations". It is likely that Mr. Trudeau will bring Canada back toward the internationalist fold. However, it remains to be seen how quickly and deeply that will happen.



Jeffrey Feltman  
21 October 2015

cc: Mr. Eliasson  
Ms. Malcorra