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CANADIAN INTERVENTION ON POVERTY
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HEAD OF DELEGATION

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today on the links between poverty and environmental degradation. Poverty, or the lack of access to a dignified and healthy livelihood and to decision-making structures and systems, remains one of the central issues of our times.

While Canada is rightly seen to be a wealthy country within the global community, there still remain specific groups within Canada, such as indigenous peoples, the disabled and women whom the general prosperity of the country has not always reached.

We are, however, fully aware that developing countries face a vastly greater problem both in terms of the degree of poverty experienced by their people and in the absolute numbers of people affected. While governments and NGOs have developed many innovative approaches for the elimination of poverty, much remains to be done in terms of learning from these innovations and in developing new approaches. Micro successes at the local level too often have been negated by the lack of enabling policies and programmes at the national and global levels.

In Canada's programmes of official development assistance we have made an overall commitment to the achievement of sustainable development. The recently developed mission statement for CIDA, our ministry of state for overseas development is no less than to quote support sustainable development in developing countries unquote. We have worked hard to broaden the definition of sustainable development to include five major parameters: environmental, economic, political, social and cultural and have drafted a framework document elaborating these parameters.

With these points in mind Mr. Chairman, Canada would like to propose the following four priorities:

1. There needs to be a better understanding of the relationship between environmental degradation, poverty and international financial and trade systems. We urge those institutions already tasked with these considerations such as the OECD, GATT, UNCTAD, the World Bank and the regional banks to deepen their understanding of these relationships and to make sustainability a high priority.