

PART A

Chapter 3: NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS

The government had hoped and sought to ensure that 1981 - the year of the Summits - would focus international attention on North-South issues at a high political level and would therefore result in renewed momentum for the North-South dialogue. Some successes were achieved. Lack of more substantive progress on the North-South dialogue was, however, of serious concern because the economic position of developing countries had not improved significantly during the year; in fact, the deterioration in the world economy had an adverse affect on practically all developing countries, including the oil-exporting states.

Discussion on North-South issues at the Ottawa Economic Summit was productive, and this was reflected in the Declaration that emerged from the meeting. The UN conferences on new and renewable sources of energy, held in Nairobi in August, and that on the least-developed developing countries, held in Paris in September, agreed upon programs of action that will enhance future international co-operation. The frank and constructive discussions among key world leaders at the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Melbourne in early October and the Cancun Summit, later that month, fostered increased political commitment to the North-South dialogue.

Within Canada, the government pursued efforts to enhance public understanding of North-South relations and to increase support for Canada's role in the North-South dialogue. The main elements of the government's position were set out in its positive response to the report of the Parliamentary task force on North-South relations. The government's policies reflected both the humanitarian motivation of the Canadian people and an appreciation of the mutual benefit that results from an equitable and open relationship with developing countries. The government's broad objectives were to seek to harmonize those of Canada's external and domestic policies which have an impact on developing countries, to employ a variety of policy instruments to respond directly to the economic and social needs of developing countries, and to integrate the South more closely into the international economic system.

North-South Summit

The North-South Summit, which took place in Cancun, Mexico, October 22-23, 1981, was the major event in the field in 1981. Its greatest contribution was to increase the direct and personal involvement of major world leaders from both the industrialized and developing countries, in the North-South dialogue. The meeting was a success in many respects. Under the co-chairmanship of Prime Minister Trudeau and Mexican President Lopez Portillo, leaders of 22 developing and developed nations were able to have frank, informal and constructive discussions on a wide range of important issues in North-South relations. Despite divergent philosophies and interests, a spirit of trust and confidence was established which enabled