



Statements and Speeches

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THE EMERGENCY IN AFRICA

Statement by Stephen Lewis, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, to the Fortieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 7, 1985.

Mr. President. The emergency in Africa is not over. In spite of the arrival of bountiful rains in some areas and the harvesting of bumper crops, countless numbers of Africans are still starving or hungry or malnourished. There is still misery. Famine still stalks many lands. The situation now is vastly better than it was one year ago, but much more must yet be done.

At incomparable human cost, the world has learned some lessons since the start of the African emergency; let us resolve that they are not forgotten, and that hereafter, we will put in place a series of responses, policies, and programs which, collectively, will make an equivalent catastrophe impossible.

Canada believes that while the emergency remains the imperative, we must increasingly emphasize follow-up measures for the international community so that a rehabilitation program can be established with two major long-term goals: (a) to help Africa better anticipate and better manage any future emergency situations; and (b) to put Africa on an economic path that will reverse the continent's recent decline and ensure that sustained development is achieved for the future.

These two goals will only be achieved by an immediate and prolonged commitment of resources, accompanied by extensive policy changes, and close co-ordination between the international community and African countries. The task is daunting. It requires single-minded political will over a very long haul.

The African emergency has had a stunning impact on this world. It has restored the milk of human kindness to even the most obdurate of cynics. It has brought a massive global outpouring of emergency assistance to Africa. The international system has shown that it can respond with speed, compassion, and generosity. In food aid alone, during 1984-85 donor countries will have shipped an estimated 11.7 million tonnes of cereals to Africa. To put it in stark relief, food aid to Sub-Saharan Africa will account for one half of total cereal imports and one sixth of total cereal production in the region. What more morose statistics are necessary to illustrate the impact of drought on agricultural production, as well as the recuperative antithesis — the strong support of the world community?

Agriculture is, however, only one facet of the critical situation in Africa. The emergency's more lasting effect has been to dramatize and exacerbate already serious economic problems and to constrain, drastically, economic development. Over-all, the Economic Commission for Africa calculates that total output *per capita* on the continent dropped 10 per cent from 1980 to 1984, and *per capita* food production is now only 94 per cent of what it was ten years ago. One could be clinical about it and note that this lack of real growth in output obviously has adverse consequences on balance