

Mr. President,

I wish to join those who have spoken before me to congratulate you on your election to preside over our proceedings.

You bring to your High Office a range of learning and of experience that bear directly on the matters we have before us. The acclamation by which you were elected expressed the confidence of this Conference in your capacity to help us bring our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

I should also like to pay tribute to the Secretary General of the Conference. He, too, is no stranger to the problems we shall be surveying. His special credentials are reflected in the quality of the preparatory work that has been done. Given the importance of the Conference, there has been all too little time to set the parameters of our discussions. Nevertheless, it seems to my delegation that we have rarely entered upon a Conference where the issues have been set out with greater clarity or the solutions with greater realism than in the documents the Secretary General has put before us.

This Conference is engaged on a mission to seek the elimination of hunger -- man's oldest scourge and most persistent enemy. Together with the Law of the Sea Conference in Caracas and the World Population Conference in Bucharest, it is part of a process of reassessment of man's global relationship to the resources that sustain him that may yield us a new consciousness of the global responsibilities carried by every nation and people. We in Canada will not shirk these responsibilities, and are willing to play our part in furthering those common endeavours which bear promise of helping to produce a lasting freedom from want for all mankind -- but the endeavours will remain barren if they are not truly common and truly sustained.

Hunger must today be tackled at every level -- at the family, village, province, country and region as well as the global level, for no unit of society bears any graver responsibility than that of feeding its people. In our present world community we are everywhere faced with an agonizing awareness of starvation wherever it occurs; and finding means to harness production around the world to alleviate it poses a challenge to our ingenuity as well as to our compassion. We in Canada recognize that our farmers can grow more than they do at present. To that end, we have recently taken several policy initiatives that will not only ensure that producers will have more stable and satisfactory returns, but that they will have a better transport and storage system to get their products to market. We believe that these initiatives will permit Canadian agriculture more nearly to reach its potential. We must however remember that, whatever food may move innately, most men for the foreseeable future will inevitably remain dependent on the food produced near to their neighbourhood markets.