

the leaders for the first time expressed their concern over subsidy practices and protectionist measures that are distorting world agricultural markets.

Agriculture became one of the main issues of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations launched in 1986. Agriculture is only part of a very broad negotiation agenda, which includes trade in goods and services, new trade rules, and the creation of a multilateral trade organization to manage the outcome of the negotiations.

While macroeconomic and trade issues have traditionally been uppermost on the agenda, other global issues have gained prominence over the years. Summit statements on such international problems as terrorism, narcotics and human rights abuse focus international attention and frequently lead to action. At the 1981 Ottawa Summit, for example, the focus on relations between developed and developing countries led to the North-South Summit in Cancun, Mexico. Growing awareness of environmental concerns since the Toronto Summit of 1988 has made linking economic development and environmental protection an international priority, and shaped the outcome of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992.

Recent summits have addressed the issue of reconstruction in Central and Eastern Europe. In 1989, leaders asked the Commission of the European Communities to take the steps necessary to co-ordinate assistance to support reforms in Poland and Hungary. Since then, co-ordinated assistance through the 24 member countries of the OECD, the G-24, has been extended to all the countries of the region.

In 1989 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev first wrote to summit leaders outlining his objective of integrating the Soviet Union into the international economic system. At the Houston Summit in 1990, leaders asked four organizations — the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development — to complete a joint study of the Soviet economy and recommend reforms. The next year, immediately after the London Summit, leaders met with President Gorbachev to review his reform plans. In 1992,

leaders met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin after the Munich Summit to consider developments in his country and announce a comprehensive assistance package for Russia.

The first objective of summits is providing the opportunity for G-7 leaders to discuss among themselves the economic and political issues of the day, from their individual perspectives as heads of government and national political leaders. At the centre of the event are the private meetings of elected leaders whose task is to balance national interests with the need for collective response to issues. Most recommendations for summit reform are aimed at improving the leaders' opportunities for such discussions.

On some issues, summit leaders agree that joint action must supplement measures their governments are taking individually. This may be a major initiative that captures public attention — the collective response to assistance for Russia and Eastern Europe falls into this category — or one that goes relatively unnoticed, like the establishment of a \$150 million nuclear safety fund agreed upon at the Munich Summit.

CANADA'S PLACE AT THE ECONOMIC SUMMIT

Canada joined the economic summit process in 1976 during a time of instability and change. Oil price shocks, instability in financial markets, and economic uncertainty all underlined the need for expanded dialogue and greater policy coherence among the leading industrial democracies.

Canada is the world's seventh largest industrialized economy. Its wealth of natural resources was important to western countries during a time of uncertain supplies of energy and raw material. As a nation dependent on international trade, Canada has consistently favoured progressive trade liberalization. Any action on exchange rates is critically important to Canada. Accordingly, it is important for Canada to be at the table where such courses of action are set.

Canada's lack of a colonialist past, clear commitment to multilateralism — in particular its support for the United Nations and the UN's peacekeeping operations — and status as a major