

delegates. That requires us to listen, to understand and to work patiently together.

In fact, I suspect that one of the benefits of the UNCED process for NGOs has been the exposure to the different and deeply held opinions of representatives of other countries and other sectors of our own society.

The issues are complex. That is not an excuse for inaction. It is a reality. If these problems were easy, they would have been solved long ago. Finding points of disagreement, at UNCED or anywhere else, is always easy. Working for a consensus that will produce action is harder but ultimately far more satisfying and indeed a greater accomplishment.

For all that, I believe that we are making progress. Our recent contacts with developing states suggest that they do not expect a massive transfer of funds from North to South to be made at Rio in exchange for environmental action. They are only too well aware of the current financial pressures on governments of developed states. However, they seek the understanding of the public in countries like Canada of the links between poverty and the environment. They seek clear commitments of new funds to meet these needs. And that is a commitment we are prepared to make.

I firmly believe that, at the end of the day, we will have achievements in Rio to which we can point with pride. And I also believe that we will have developed a momentum that will keep us moving forward. But those achievements will not be the sole product of diplomats or of Cabinet Ministers or of environmentalists, no matter how well-intentioned. They will be the product of people around the world who see changes in their air, their water or the lives of those around them -- and who do not like what they see. They will be the product of women and men taking action in their communities and their world.

Many of those people are in Canada. During the government's recent review of Canada's foreign policy priorities, Canadians told us that they wanted to see greater emphasis placed on efforts to improve the world's environment. In fact, two thirds of those surveyed indicated that protecting the world environment should be either the first or second priority of our foreign policy. That was a higher level than for any other issue -- arms control, trade or the promotion of human rights.

So, our recent Foreign Policy Themes and Priorities document reflects the fact that Canadians understand that a world based on sustainable development will be a safer, more secure one. It recognizes that Canada benefits from global agreements that reduce barriers between nations.