

lack of follow-through, and indeed the apparent setbacks which summits at times suffer, naturally give rise to questions.

**Importance of  
summits**

I remain convinced, however, of the ultimate utility of the summit process. Summits make three major contributions in my view: the personal impact on leaders; the opportunity for a review of governmental priorities; and the provision of renewed momentum to ongoing negotiations.

Least quantifiable, but possibly most important, is the effect of summit discussions on individual participants. At Cancun, for example I was particularly struck by the frankness of the discussions. Leaders who otherwise might seldom be directly challenged found themselves vigorously defending their positions before others holding very different views. To the extent that heads of state draw from this experience a better appreciation of the concerns of others, an altered sense of priorities, and a heightened feeling of urgency, the summits will have achieved and will continue to achieve a great deal.

One of the prerequisites to real movement on North-South issues is, of course, the acknowledgement of interdependence. At the meetings I attended, there was I thought, a growing and genuine recognition on all sides that domestic economic problems cannot be resolved in isolation from the economic difficulties of others. Despite obvious pressures to the contrary in this difficult period, I believe that this perception will and must prevail. As John Donne wrote in the seventeenth century, "No man is an island, entire of itself". Neither is any country.

If the art of governing is the juggling of priorities, then the process of summits has also been a significant tool in moving North-South issues to the forefront of governments' attention. Preparations for meetings involving heads of state or governments encourage those governments to reassess their policies in relation to the issues expected at the summit. While such periodic attention might conceivably occur in any event, the imminence of summit deadlines — to paraphrase Dr. Johnson on hanging — certainly has the effect of concentrating minds most wonderfully.

Impetus to on-going negotiations is the third potential contribution of summit meetings, but perhaps the most difficult to judge. Certainly in my view, there have been achievements in this regard. The Ottawa Summit, for example, emphasized priorities which were then effectively pursued at the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and at that on the Least Developed [the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Developing Countries].

**Global negotia-  
tions dominate  
agenda**

Many of you, however, may pin your ultimate assessment of summitry on its effect on efforts to launch global negotiations. I can indeed testify that this issue, more than any other, has dominated the North-South agenda, both bilaterally and multilaterally, over the past year.