

Canada is currently undertaking domestic consultations regarding a proposed improvement to the Least Developed Country Tariff (part of Canada's General Preferential Tariff), including the expansion of the duty-free product coverage and further liberalization of the rules-of-origin requirements.

The International Development Research Centre's Trade, Employment and Competitiveness Program supports developing countries in their efforts to participate more effectively in the global economy by improving negotiation and bargaining skills in international trade forums; enhancing the role of trade in the development process by improving policy formulation and streamlining institutional mechanisms; and developing consistent and coherent policies to deal with fast-changing economic developments at home and abroad.

The Environment and Sustainable Development

Over the last 25 years, environmental issues have become increasingly important items on the international agenda. Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, these issues are being viewed through a wider "sustainable development" lens. Once perceived as primarily local, many environmental problems are now recognized as having a regional and global impact. Their solutions must come not only through concerted domestic and international action, but also through action that integrates economic and social concerns.

Sustainable development

Recent summits have provided high-level impetus to a number of emerging sustainable development issues. The agenda of the 1997 Denver Summit, for instance, included climate change, forests, fresh water and freshwater resources, oceans, desertification, environmental standards for export credit agencies, environmental institutions and children's health. The Denver discussions immediately preceded a UN General Assembly Special Session in New York which reviewed international progress on Earth Summit commitments. That session, in turn, helped set the stage for the Kyoto Protocol, drawn up at the December 1997 meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto, Japan. Canada was active in both New York and Japan.

Environment ministers have met regularly for the past several years to discuss sustainable development issues. At their most recent meeting, in April 1998, G-8 ministers reached understandings on issues related to climate change, environment and employment, protection of marine biodiversity, enforcement of multilateral agreements and children's health. At the Birmingham Summit, the key sustainable development issue will be climate change. Forests, fresh water and freshwater resources, oceans and greening of export credits will also be on the agenda.