

The Secretary General suggested during the preparations for this conference that we should try to make something a little different of it. I fully agree. It seems to me there are two broad approaches we have to consider. The first I would describe as the systemic restructuring approach. The second would be to direct our attention to making the system we have work better. Canada would be the last country to claim that our present system of international institutions is perfect or that it fully meets the needs of the developed and developing world. It obviously does not. We would also be the last to deny that change is constantly needed. As a medium-sized country, intent to pursue independent interests in a difficult world, Canada places great importance on the smooth functioning of an international system which can flexibly adapt to a changing international environment. However, Mr. President, I would argue in the context of this Conference that in UNCTAD we have frequently placed too much emphasis on the system and not enough on national will. If I have a criticism of the excellent platform which the Group of 77 put together in Buenos Aires, it would be the priority it places on the radical restructuring of present institutions and the creation of yet more mechanisms. It seems to me that in recent years we have, as an international community, spent far too much time in trying to devise new machinery and not enough in making what we have work better.

This, then, would be my challenge to this Conference. By all means let us admit that the system can be improved. But let us spend our time on building confidence in "making it work". I recently asked myself if the credibility of all of us would not be much enhanced and the effectiveness of the international system would not be improved if as countries, we lived up to the commitments already made. A few illustrations would help to make the point. Aid targets, for example, have been with us since the 1960s and have been accepted by nearly all - yet we seem to get no closer to them. Our international financial institutions and development banks were created with great promise; yet they suffer from lack of resources. We agreed on a replenishment for IDA and cannot seem to put it into place on schedule. We have committed ourselves time and time again to resist protectionism in all its forms, and yet we find it mounting. Two UNCTADs ago, we seemed to be well on the way to an integrated programme of commodities and the establishment of the Common Fund. Eight years later, the Common Fund is still not in being and the number of commodity agreements is few. We agree to the International Development Strategy for the 1980s and then make scant reference to it in our subsequent actions.