
I mentioned the increasing focus on human-resources skills. It has become more generally accepted that constraints on development cannot be broken unless much greater attention is paid to the development of the human factor as the primary instrument in the development process. This has led agencies like the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to modify considerably the ways in which they intervene in developing countries. As a result, the percentage of the CIDA budget going to non-governmental organizations, where person-to-person relationships are usually predominant, has been growing considerably. In short, development is not only building economic infrastructures, it is the way in which the totality in interactions, economic and human, influence the direction of a society.

I have spoken about the current priorities of Canada's bilateral assistance programs — food, energy and human resources — aimed essentially at the development needs of the poorest countries. It is not these — the poorest — who are likely to benefit the most from changes brought about by negotiations between North and South, although this in itself presents a challenge to Canada, in other words, how to better orient the results of North-South negotiations towards the poorest. It is vital that development assistance continues to flow in significant quantities to these countries. One clear role for Canada is to pay particular heed to the special needs of the poorest and to try to focus attention in the course of North-South discussions and negotiations on the need to take special steps in favour of this particular group of countries.

Canada's role

Turning to North-South discussions and negotiations and Canada's role, I think that we clearly have a role to play. We can of course contribute directly by way of assistance and expertise to the South and we must constantly refine this assistance so that it is of maximum benefit. Secondly, we can help move forward the dialogue between North and South. For example, Prime Minister Trudeau, in his travels and preparations for the Ottawa Summit, attached a very high priority to North-South issues. In his view, and in mine also, there is absolutely no alternative to action.

Canada has always sought to play an active role in North-South negotiations in attempting to stimulate movement and to conciliate the conflicting views of our industrialized partners and those of the developing world.

Given the nature of our economy — our desire, for example, to play a greater role in the processing of our own commodity exports — there are a number of areas where our interests have much in common with those of developing countries. We have had to face many of the same problems which they face today.

We have, moreover, many special ties with developing countries through, for example, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. At the same time, we are a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and of the Western Summit and participate in special groups such as the "like-minded" meeting of middle powers which focuses on North-South relations. To the extent that these opportunities give us increased insight into the interests of developed and developing countries alike, we are able, I believe, to play on occasion a valuable "bridge-builder" role. This role was underlined by the recent report of the parliamentary task force on North-South relations which stated that "Canada should help build bridges between
