

A Decade for Africa

The people and government of Canada should join in supporting a "Decade for Africa", a long-term national commitment to strengthen the bonds between Canadians and Africans and to provide sustained assistance for African relief, recovery and development. The basic requirements for meeting this challenge are threefold: government leadership, communication and partnership.

Government Leadership

The direct involvement of individual Canadians and non-governmental organizations forms the foundation of our country's commitment to Africa. But the Canadian government will remain the principal channel through which that commitment is manifested and leadership is exercised. It is especially important that the government clearly signal its intentions now, as it prepares for the Tokyo Economic Summit and the United Nations Special Session on Africa in May.

A first step in that direction would be to declare a "Decade for Africa" as a major foreign policy commitment. To give substance to that policy, African countries should have a special place within the Canadian aid program. The government should ensure that Canadian assistance to Africa grows steadily over the decade. To further increase its value and responsiveness, our assistance should be progressively freed from tying requirements. To permit a more flexible response to actual needs, the system of categorizing recipient African countries should be suspended. To focus Canadian efforts, self-sufficient food production should be set as the number one priority. Following a thorough Canadian assessment of African debt and trade problems, Canada should support trade liberalization and debt adjustment measures to encourage African economic recovery and development.

The Minister for External Relations should have direct responsibility for implementing the "Decade for Africa". In this lead role the Minister should be assisted by a senior level order-in-council appointment, bringing together the responsibilities for Africa in the Department of External Affairs and CIDA. Together they should ensure the following:

- establishment of an early warning and emergency preparedness unit;