

II. STATEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE THEME

"Africa 1996 Afrique: Crisis/Crise & *Renaissance*"

Following the optimism of Independence in the 1960s and growth in the 1970s, Africa's fortunes declined in the 1980s, leading to crisis in the 1990s. The current crisis in Africa is social, political, economic, environmental, demographic and medical in nature. We are concerned not only with understanding the genesis and nature of the crisis, but also the inventiveness and resilience revealed as the continent seeks models of resurgence and rebirth to meet the challenges of the present.

The 1996 meeting shall be concerned with political conflict, within and between countries, its mediation and resolution, the search for new forms of governance through democratization, the growing international influence of South Africa under majority government, the effectiveness of structural adjustment policies and their environmental and social effects, responses to the agrarian crisis and debates over changing forms of property and land tenure, different trends in migration and population across the continent, trends in the spread of HIV and social and economic responses to AIDS, and the humanizing role of African arts, music and literature as expressions of the human spirit and of resistance to crisis.

The program reflects the diversity as well as the interconnectedness of the many dimensions of the African crisis. We are holding a series of plenary sessions which involve academics, specialists in foreign affairs and international human rights and the activist and development communities. Samir Amin will present the keynote address on "The Causes of Africa's Economic Disaster". The International Development Research Centre is sponsoring a development forum to be held on "Democratization in Africa: Beyond Formal Politics!". With the collaboration of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade we will convene a Plenary Symposium on "Preventive Diplomacy: Conflict Mediation Before the Fact", a new theme in international policy. And in conjunction with Vues d'Afrique, we are convening a Plenary Roundtable on "Africa and the Media". Other plenary sessions will concern the mediation of regional conflict, the role of the media in development, and environmental and health implications of the agrarian crisis.

Reinforcing the melding of the humanistic and scientific within our Association, as well as in African life, we will join with the international African film festival, *Vues d'Afriques*, a world famous event held each year in Montreal, to present a program of cinematic presentations and debates between scholars and filmmakers. This program, especially aimed at the CAAS audience, will include two film series, on "Images of Subversion: Alternative Views on Culture and Politics in Africa" and "(Re)Viewing Conflict: Media(ting) Images of Africa". We are also collaborating on two evening debates which spring from the engagement between art and life: a debate involving African filmmakers and media specialists on the culturally and politically critical and innovative in media forms ("Images of Subversion"), and a roundtable on "(Re)Viewing Conflict: Genocide and Justice in Africa". The final plenary session, with representation from Foreign Affairs, IDRC, CIDA and the academic community, will involve a discussion of the evolution of Canadian foreign and development policy towards Africa, and future prospects in African-Canadian relations.