

In their messages delivered at the beginning of the proceedings, Ministers Bongo and Pepin had words of praise for the bonds of friendship and cooperation between their two countries and were pleased to see this meeting of the Bilateral Commission being held in Ottawa. The Commission provides a framework for reflecting on, planning, coordinating and intensifying the bilateral relationship. It was formed during a working visit to Canada in October, 1980.

The two Ministers had a wide exchange of views on current major problems and on questions of bilateral cooperation.

They discussed the international political situation, with particular emphasis on Africa, and reiterated their strong support for rapid independence for Namibia, in accordance with UN Resolution 435 (78).

Mr. Bongo expressed the support of the Gabonese government for the peace initiative undertaken by Prime Minister Trudeau.

Mr. Pepin congratulated the Gabonese government on its efforts to consolidate its economic development.

The two sides then conducted an extensive review of the economic situation in both countries. They examined priority areas of cooperation and possible ways of enriching it.

Regarding the world economic situation, the Ministers expressed their conviction that only through increased international economic cooperation, such as that being pursued by their two countries, can there be a levelling of the present imbalance of incomes, which shows signs of worsening and further increasing the socio-economic inequalities between North and South.

On the subject of bilateral cooperation, the two sides paid particular attention to matters of trade, technical assistance and the implementation of concrete projects to further the economic and social development of Gabon.

The two sides examined ways of consolidating cooperation in the field of human resources, particularly training in education, health, energy and water resources, transportation, social affairs, culture, the arts and small and medium businesses.