



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA'S ROLE IN THE DIALOGUE OF NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Parliamentary Task Force on North-South Relations, Ottawa, October 29, 1980

...May I say also how pleased I am by the contribution the Task Force is making to the stimulation of public discussion on North-South issues, not only through the publication of the Interim Report, but also through the regular press coverage of its hearings. I am in full agreement with the Task Force recommendations with respect to promoting public awareness and discussion in Canada of North-South issues. I believe this aspect will be of crucial importance in the coming months and years. I would therefore welcome your further views on this key issue and I am particularly interested in how the Task Force sees its own role in this regard. If I may, I will return to this point later.

This issue is of course all the more important given the attention which will be focused on North-South questions during the course of 1981. The Global Negotiations, the proposed North-South Summit, the Ottawa Summit, the meeting of Commonwealth heads of government and negotiations in a variety of other fora will all require co-ordinated and effective Canadian positions. For this reason, parallel to the work of the Task Force, the government has initiated its own process of review of North-South issues and the role which Canada should play in the ongoing dialogue. I would like in my presentation, therefore, to highlight for you some preliminary thoughts on the state of the dialogue, both in terms of process and substance, as well as some of the specific issues which Canada will need to address in the coming months.

I do not think that there is any need to dwell today on the nature and scope of the problems which are encompassed under the North-South framework. You are all too well aware of the real economic constraints which developed countries, including Canada, are themselves now facing. You are all familiar with the statistics — the increasing number of the world's "absolute poor"; the escalating balance-of-payments difficulties of developing countries as a result of massive oil-price increases; the deteriorating economic situation in even the newly-industrializing countries. At the same time, and regrettably, statistics lose their shock value with repeated reference and we tend to become increasingly immune. It is therefore particularly important for all of us to keep central in our minds the human dimension — a dimension which many of you know from personal experience in developing countries.

The last time we met together was in New York City at the eleventh Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly. While the Special Session was but one element of the ongoing North-South dialogue, I would like to use it as a point of departure today for my comments on the process of the dialogue and its future prospects. If the Special Session cannot be characterized as a total success, it should
