

We are here to consider our future - not just the future of the developing world, but the future of all of us, developed and developing countries together. There can be no real peace in the world so long as almost a billion people live in the helplessness of absolute poverty. There can be no enduring stability so long as so many nations remain dangerously vulnerable to economic uncertainty. There can be no meaningful security so long as the poorer countries remain unable to meet the development aspirations of their people.

In candour, we have to admit that too often we have permitted ourselves, as governments, to become caught up in the short-term difficulties of our individual political and economic situations, to the neglect of longer-term global objectives. Too many of us have viewed international development as a matter of charity, rather than recognizing that progress and improvement in one part of this interdependent world benefits everyone.

I propose to exercise the candour I spoke of not only on behalf of the Canadians I represent, but also to them.

For example the adaptation of the world trade and payments system to promote accelerated growth in developing countries is to the benefit of all. To attempt to preserve entrenched privilege is by far the costliest approach in anything but the shortest term, compounding our problems for the future and resulting in further insecurity and instability.

The circumstances in which this Special Session takes place are not those which prevailed five years ago when the Seventh Special Session achieved agreement on such important overall goals as trade, resources transfer, technology and food. At that time we believed that we had enhanced our sensitivity to the problems of the developing countries and to our interdependence as nations. But in the intervening period we have made insufficient progress in moving towards our goals or in resolving North/South problems. A number of explanations have been offered for this lack of action, some valid, others specious.

In a number of the industrialized countries, for example, the blame has been laid on economic recession and inflation. This, however, ignores some rather basic truths. We have to admit that although all industrialized countries have suffered severe economic problems, not all have neglected their obligations to the developing world. Such an excuse also overlooks the possibility that our failure to achieve more balanced global development may itself have contributed in no small measure to the factors that have fed the recession.