

# GLOBAL ISSUES: PROMOTING A NEW MULTILATERALISM

The recent outpouring of support by Canadians for tsunami disaster relief in Asia highlights the strong humanitarian traditions that characterize our society and our foreign policy. The help we provide developing countries, whether through development assistance, access to our market, or debt relief, is another reflection of our values. At the same time, we must also recognize that we have a vital interest in ensuring that the developing world becomes healthier, safer and more prosperous. It is here that five-sixths of humanity resides, where almost all population growth will occur, especially in cities, and where economic dynamism is taking hold. But it is also here that most poverty exists, where we will see the greatest environmental and health issues arise—including new infectious diseases—and where conflict, including terrorism, will continue to occur unless we act now, and much more effectively than in the past.

Canada has long understood that multilateral cooperation is essential if the world is to make progress in preventing and ending conflict, promoting sustainable development and enabling commerce. Today, multilateral cooperation that is focused on results is more important than ever. It is the only option open to us if we are to successfully tackle emerging global issues, to protect people around the world against violence, and to give them the opportunity to build prosperous, fulfilling lives.

This focus on results underpins Canada's "Responsibilities Agenda," introduced by the Prime Minister at the 2004 UN General Assembly session. It is aimed at encouraging concrete action by the international community to meet our five most pressing, shared responsibilities: to protect civilians

## AN UNEQUAL WORLD

Of the world's 6 billion people, there remain 2.8 billion people living on less than US\$2/day.

The richest 5% of the world's population have incomes 114 times greater than those of the poorest 5%, while the richest 1% receive as much annually as the poorest 57%.

— UNDP Human Development Report, 2002

## A MORE SECURE WORLD

In 2004, the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change released its report *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*. The Panel argues that "today more than ever before, threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all." The Panel deals with the following clusters of threats: war between states; poverty; infectious diseases; environmental degradation; intra-state conflict; the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; terrorism; and transnational organized crime. It also proposes reforms for the principal organs of the UN, including models for Security Council reform.

from conflict; to control weapons of mass destruction; to advance human rights; to promote genuine development (in part through greater trade); and to preserve the global commons.

As the only truly global organization, the United Nations has a unique opportunity to take action on these five responsibilities. Key to success is the UN's reform agenda. This includes benchmarks for combatting poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the recommendations of both the report of the High Level Panel *A More Secure World* and the report of the Secretary-General *In Larger Freedom*, which deal with security, development and human rights issues.

That said, finding international consensus on the way ahead will be difficult. Canada, guided by the Responsibilities Agenda, will do its part. Foreign Affairs will have a key role in pursuing a new multilateralism that:

- advances democracy through good governance, human rights protection and respect for diversity;
- supports more effective sustainable development strategies;
- strengthens international development, including health policy coordination; and
- streamlines and modernizes our multilateral diplomacy for greater effectiveness.