

THE ROAD TO KANANASKIS

Africa at the heart of the G8 Summit

On June 26 and 27, 2002, in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada will host the 28th Summit of the G8 (or Group of Seven leading industrialized nations plus the Russian Federation). While economic issues will have an important place on the Summit agenda, another focus of attention will be the future development of Africa. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has made this a personal priority.

Poverty is the worst form of violence.

—Mahatma Gandhi

A continent adrift

This past February 1 at the World Economic Forum in New York City, Prime Minister Chrétien issued a ringing call for a new international commitment to Africa:

“By every index or measure, Africa now lives on the fringes of our globalized world. And is at risk of falling so far behind that it may never catch up. We can’t allow that to happen. All nations have a moral obligation and an economic interest in reversing these depressing statistics. Working as partners with Africans in the realization of their hopes is an affirmation of our common humanity.”

To illustrate the urgent need for action, Mr. Chrétien cited some telling facts and figures:

- Africa today is the only continent where poverty is on the rise.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, almost half of the people live on less than a dollar a day.
- With 10 percent of the world’s population, Africa accounts for just 1.5 percent of global trade.
- Life expectancy there is only 47 years, and declining.
- Of the 40 million people infected with HIV/AIDS more than two thirds live in sub-Saharan Africa, and nearly 70 percent of new cases occur there.
- More than 140 million young Africans are illiterate.
- One African in five is caught up in armed conflict.

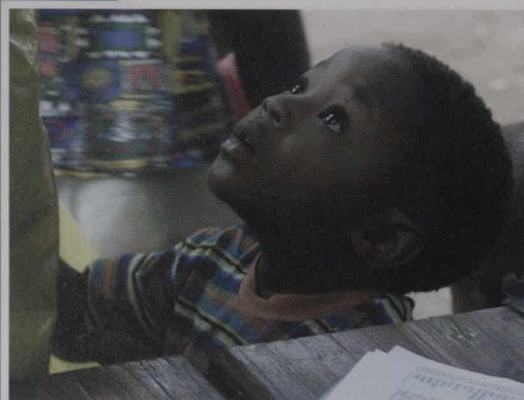
Taking action

Last year at the G8 Summit in Genoa, Italy, a delegation of progressive African leaders tabled the New African Initiative (NAI). This proposal called for an in-depth examination of the situation in Africa, and the adoption of an action plan to meet the social, political and economic challenges facing the people of Africa. NAI has since been reworked by the African leaders with the assistance of the G8 countries, and is now called the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

According to the Prime Minister, NEPAD represents a profound opportunity to turn a page in human history. He believes that acting on its principles is not only the right thing to do but also “a good investment. An investment in our common future. In our collective security and common humanity.”

Mr. Chrétien added that the quality of life brought to so many of us by globalization must also be open to everyone: “To have real meaning, prosperity must be accompanied by progress and hope for all.”

To give shape to their commitment to Africa, the G8 countries—which asked Canada to take the lead on the issue—will adopt an action plan at Kananaskis. That plan is now being drafted by the Personal Representatives of the leaders of the G8 and the African nations.



A child with AIDS at a shelter in South Africa. The self-funded facility cares for abandoned children and children with AIDS whose families cannot look after them. According to latest UNAIDS/WHO estimates, HIV/AIDS took the lives of 3.0 million adults and children in 2001—2.3 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

PAST G7/G8 SUMMITS HELD IN CANADA

- 1981 Ottawa, Ontario, and Montebello, Quebec
- 1988 Toronto, Ontario
- 1995 Halifax, Nova Scotia