

# Chapter 3

## MULTILATERAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

### The United Nations

The highlight of this period of the UN system was undoubtedly the commemoration of its fortieth anniversary. There were a number of notable successes during 1985-86, but the system came under extreme financial strain early in 1986. Canada continued its longstanding commitment to strengthen the United Nations by promoting proposals for practical reforms designed to improve the system's performance.

The fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations occurred on October 24. Some 100 heads of state and government gave commemorative addresses to the General Assembly, testimony to the virtually universal recognition of the value of the United Nations to its member countries. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney spoke on this occasion of the need for all countries to recognize their common interest in the United Nations and to respect the principles of its Charter. He called on the international community to take urgent action to reduce the threat of nuclear war, to liberalize trade and improve economic conditions in poor countries, to fight terrorism and to support the child immunization program of UNICEF as a simple and inexpensive way to save the lives of millions of children every year. He condemned *apartheid* and called on South Africa to change its racial policies before a violent crisis engulfs it.

In a fitting tribute to the fortieth anniversary, debate at the General Assembly was more moderate in tone during 1985. Member states appeared to recognize that the polemics and repetitive debate of previous sessions were not only unproductive but had led governments and public opinion in many countries to downgrade or ignore the United Nations. Among other successes, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted a declaration on international terrorism by consensus in 1985 after many years of difficult negotiations.

Another notable achievement during the year was the adoption of the Forward-Looking Strategies at the Nairobi Conference which was held to conclude the UN Decade for Women. Subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly, the Strategies form a plan for the better integration of women into the planning and decision-making processes across a wide spectrum of activities which affect their lives and in which they can make a major contribution. Their adoption by consensus was all the more remarkable given the extremely varied perceptions of the role of women in different societies.

However hopeful the signs of realism and moderation at the United Nations in 1985, the organization faced a major financial crisis as of January 1986. Legislation enacted by the US Congress, the Kassebaum and Gramm-Rudman amendments, brought the UN's long-standing financial problems to a crisis point by reducing American contributions by more than \$80 million (US). The UN's financial flexibility had already

been seriously debilitated by the withholding for many years of parts of their assessments by other states, most notably the Soviet Union.

In an effort to avert this serious cash-flow crisis and in anticipation of a resumed session of the General Assembly which the Secretary-General deemed it necessary to convene in April of 1986, Canada and other donor countries sought to build general agreement that member countries should pay their assessed contributions promptly and that UN operations should be rationalized by eliminating unnecessary, duplicative and low-priority activities. A study of longer-term reforms was to be undertaken by a high-level intergovernmental group of experts which was constituted by the General Assembly in December.

The period under review was a decisive time for UNESCO as that organization tried, through various reforms, to keep the United Kingdom and Singapore as members even though both of had served notice of withdrawal. During this period Canada, with other member states, succeeded in having various measures passed to strengthen and improve UNESCO. The organization adopted and implemented better financial, administrative and managerial practices. Nevertheless, after the biennial Sofia Conference in October and November 1985, the United Kingdom and Singapore maintained their decisions to leave UNESCO. On the other hand, a number of member states were pleased and encouraged with the result of the reform process. The Honourable Monique Vézina, Minister for External Relations, accordingly declared in the House of Commons on November 18, 1985, that Canada would not abandon UNESCO but would instead continue to work from within the organization for its further reform. Since the departure of both the United States and the United Kingdom, Canada, while continuing to rank second among Francophone member states, has become the sixth-ranking contributor to the UNESCO budget and the most important among the English-speaking member states.

### North-South co-operation

Co-operation between the countries of the "North" and "South" was advanced in a number of separate discussions and negotiations in many different international forums. These discussions represented an extensive North-South agenda, reached in an incremental and evolutionary manner with an emphasis on practical objectives.

Progress was made towards launching a new Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) as a formal MTN preparatory committee was established in November 1985. Canada was an active proponent of a new Round. Canada has encouraged the full participation of developing countries as a means to ensure that their interests are recognized and