

Strengthening the United Nations

Canada believes that continued commitment is essential to revitalizing the United Nations and ensuring its relevance and effectiveness well into the next century. The 1995 Halifax Summit set an ambitious agenda of reform to prepare international institutions for the 21st century. The Lyon Summit will provide an opportunity to build on the reform initiatives laid out in Halifax in 1995 and pursued over the last year. Canada is working with other UN members to implement proposals to improve the organization's effectiveness.

While enthusiasm for the UN has been tempered by recent experience, expectations about the role it can play in the world arena remain high. Increasingly, the UN is being called on to act in more decisive and multi-faceted ways to better respond to new and more complex threats to security. Such threats include intrastate conflicts, mass migration, crime, environmental degradation and underdevelopment.

The Need to Continue Reform

Fifty years after its founding, a drastically different international environment, coupled with financial difficulties, has created the need to reform the UN system. The Secretary General is committed to revitalizing the organization. To do so he has undertaken to consider everything from administrative and financial issues to substantive policy questions.

At the 1995 Halifax Summit, leaders called for reform and renewal of UN institutions and for increased coherence between multilateral institutions involved in trade and development. Initiatives launched in Halifax are being pursued through consultations in UN capitals and in the high-level UN working groups.

Significant progress has been made towards promoting greater coherence and direction throughout the UN system. The adopted budget for 1996-97 is less than the final approved expenditures for 1994-95 and represents negative nominal growth. The Office of Internal Oversight Services has identified areas of overlap and duplication and made it possible to achieve substantial savings. Reforms introduced by the UN Conference for Trade and Development will see the number of UN internal bodies reduced and improved co-operation with the World Trade Organization on integrating developing countries into the global trading system.

Major action is still needed, however, to further eliminate duplication, improve the efficiency of the Secretariat and ensure complementarity with other institutions, such as the Bretton Woods group. Another main objective of the reform effort is to improve the organization's financial basis. The current