

Mr. Secretary-General, Distinguished Delegates,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Our meeting today convenes in an atmosphere of urgency, of crisis and of need for action. And rightly so. There can be no further question about proper timing, of delay, of further study. We, the nations of the world, are united by the same concerns and motivated by the same humanitarian impulse: to put an end to the intolerable suffering and death stalking millions in Africa. 1985 must be a year of action in Africa.

The famine in Africa is a tragedy unprecedented in modern times. The magnitude of its impact on African peoples, on our fellow beings, staggers the imagination and defies comprehension. The document, prepared by the UN Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, confirms the visions of despair we have seen on our television screens. More than 150 million people in 20 countries are facing serious food shortages. Last week, Mr. Secretary-General, during your visit to Canada, you yourself drew attention to the fact that some 30 million Africans are threatened with starvation. Countless other millions are forced to abandon their ancestral lands. The figures cannot translate the real horror. Each death is somebody's baby, son, daughter, mother or father. Each death is an incalculable loss of human potential. Each death is a stabbing pain in the human heart and conscience. In our modern world, how are such things possible?

The present crisis, to be sure, has its roots in a complex array of negative trends and does not lend itself to easy solutions. The worst drought in a century, environmental degradation, inappropriate national and international policies and rapid growth in population have all contributed to the food shortfall in Sub-Saharan Africa. They have prevented the achievement of self-sufficiency in food. Regional conflict and civil war have led as well to the destruction and dislocation of national economies. These tendencies, coupled with an international recession characterized by falling commodity prices, high interest rates, rising energy costs and inflation have led us tragically to the situation we face today.

Mr. President,

I have come here today to re-affirm the human