

FORUM AFRICA HAS BEEN PART OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS UNDERTAKEN IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR REVIEW OF FOREIGN POLICY. WE WANTED TO GIVE THE FLOOR TO CANADIANS WHO WERE INVOLVED IN RECENT MONTHS IN THE AFRICAN CRISIS. THEIR CONTRIBUTION WILL BE INVALUABLE TO THE PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO ARE CHARGED WITH MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

LAST YEAR, FORTY PER CENT OF OUR AID BUDGET WAS DIRECTED AT AFRICA - THAT IS ABOUT EIGHT HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS. WE INSISTED THAT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS PUT THE PRIORITY ON AGRICULTURE, AND ON THE NEED TO COORDINATE INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS.

BUT ABOVE ALL, WE LISTENED TO AFRICA. OUR ANTENNAE WERE OUT. DURING MY VISITS TO AFRICA, I MET WITH SEVERAL HEADS OF STATE. SIMILARLY, DAVID MACDONALD TRAVELLED TO AFRICA ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. LAST SUMMER, HERE IN OTTAWA, REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE REGIONS STRICKEN BY THE DROUGHT PRESENTED THEIR ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION TO A SYMPOSIUM ON THE AFRICAN DROUGHT. AND, IN A FEW DAYS, THE SUMMIT OF FRANCOPHONE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS WILL COME TOGETHER TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN AFRICA.

I WOULD LIKE AT THIS POINT TO SAY HOW HONOURED WE ARE TO HAVE WITH US TODAY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY, MR IDE OUMAROU, WHO WILL TAKE PART IN THE NATIONAL FORUM AFRICA PROCEEDINGS.

THUS, SLOWLY BUT SURELY, A VAST PROGRAMME OF RECOVERY IS BEING OUTLINED -- A PROGRAMME IN WHICH CANADA WILL PLAY HER PART.