

Late in 1975, the Conference on International Economic Co-operation (CIEC) was set up under the co-chairmanship of Allan J. MacEachen, then Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs and Manuel Perez Guerrero, Venezuela's Minister of State for International Economic Affairs, to determine if a limited group of developed, oil-importing developing countries and OPEC, could reach specific agreements. Although a spirit of co-operation and common purpose seemed to be emerging during the conference, CIEC ended in 1977 with only limited success.

In an effort to give greater momentum to the dialogue between North and South and to facilitate the participation of all countries, a proposal was adopted in 1979 to launch "Global Negotiations on International Co-operation for Development" to examine key issues in five areas: trade, raw materials, food, energy, and money and finance. Discussions on how to launch these global negotiations have continued, both in restricted groups - such as the 1981 Ottawa and 1982 Versailles Summits of the seven major industrialized countries and the Cancun (North-South) Summit - and at the United Nations.

Canada's Role

Canada's first undertaking with the developing world was in 1951 when we played an active role in the establishment of the Colombo Plan, a Commonwealth fund to provide technical assistance to developing countries of the Commonwealth. In the late 1960s, a United Nations Commission, chaired by the late Prime Minister Lester Pearson, produced a major report on development issues and possible solutions. The Pearson Report had a significant impact on approaches to assisting the poorer countries. Canada has since endeavoured to ensure practical results for North-South negotiations in spite of the many problems.

The main report of the Parliamentary Task Force on North-South Relations in December 1980 emphasized that Canada is uniquely placed to lead in the North-South dialogue and bridge the gap between the two groups. Canada has many links throughout the world. Our membership in the Commonwealth, and in la Francophonie -- an informal association of French-speaking countries -- give us close relations with a number of developing countries in Africa. We have hemispheric and historic ties with countries of the Caribbean and Latin America, while our Pacific coast gives us a direct link with Asia.

Canada's economy, based on resources, also relies on advanced technology and industrial production, which enables us to more readily understand the concerns of developing countries and our industrialized partners.

Encouraged by the support of the North-South Task Force, the government has played a constructive role in the North-South dialogue, setting out guidelines for the Canadian response based on principles of humanitarianism and mutual benefit. They include a recognition of interdependence, the need to harmonize external and domestic policies