

## Overview:

# CANADA AND WORLD AFFAIRS

For Western countries, 1982 was a year of economic gloom and uncertainty. For Third World countries, crippled economies sometimes exacerbated already fragile political situations; and wars, invasions, *coups d'état* and massive human rights violations brought suffering and death to countless civilians and refugees. The international attention given to the North-South dialogue in recent years gave way to a focus on East-West relations as *détente* was replaced by increased strain and suspicion. At the same time, North-South and East-West issues appeared to be increasingly interrelated as the superpowers became more preoccupied with protecting their spheres of influence in the developing world. The escalating nuclear arms race fuelled a growing concern among the public in Western democracies; the daily tragedies in Lebanon after the Israeli invasion seemed never-ending; and the Falkland Islands conflict between Britain and Argentina demonstrated that reckless acts could lead to war.

These harsh political and economic realities underlined the inescapable interdependence of nations. The complexity of these relations challenged the foreign policies of Western governments, which sought to reach consensus on major

issues while pursuing individual objectives. This balance was achieved at the two major Western summits in 1982 – the Versailles Economic Summit, and the NATO Heads of State and Governments Summit Meeting at Bonn. Final communiqués from both pledged attending members, among other things, to pursue caution in the granting of export credits to Warsaw Pact countries, a commitment which demonstrated the relationship between political and economic objectives. The leaders also agreed to pursue prudent monetary policies and achieve greater control over budgetary deficits.

At larger multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the November meeting of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Toronto meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the views of the developing world also figured in the deliberations, and while few immediate results were achieved, member nations recognized the urgency of agreeing on concerted action to deal with the international economic environment. The most positive multilateral accomplishment of the year was the signing of the UN Law of the Sea Convention by 117 nations.