

While national responsibilities are paramount, there is also a global context. We live at a time when people are being integrated into a global economy and culture. Traditional forms of solidarity, such as the extended family, as well as more modern forms of social protection are changing, as the roles of the family and the state change. Many countries are flourishing in the new economic context. However, severe problems of unemployment, poverty and income distribution have grown worse in many places, contributing to political instability, mass migration, environmental stress, and ethnic conflict.

Mr. President:

The Social Summit should be situated in the wider context of the current series of major UN international conferences that run from Rio to Istanbul. Taken together, these conferences articulate a comprehensive vision of sustainable development. Canada believes that the coherent and coordinated implementation of the conclusions of these conferences should be the principal vocation of the UN system in the economic and social fields.

Given the inevitable overlap of issues among conferences, a thematic approach to followup is the only practical way forward. This is why we were pleased by the decision of the Secretary-General to establish three inter-agency task forces organized around the following key themes: the enabling environment; meeting basic needs; and sustainable livelihoods. We are especially pleased to note the close cooperation with the World Bank and the ILO envisaged in these coordination arrangements. Goal oriented, practical cooperation between the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions, and with specialised agencies, is the best way to secure the closer partnership that is often called for. We encourage the Secretary-General to proceed with establishing a fourth task force on the empowerment and advancement of women to support sustained followup to the Beijing Platform for Action. Of course this would not diminish in any way the need for the other task forces to build the gender and sustainability dimensions into their work.

We know that the UN funds and programs have already taken steps to put social development goals in general and the followup to Copenhagen in particular at the core of their work. The UNDP can make a particular contribution in facilitating the systemwide effort by drawing upon its extensive field network to support coordinated programming and helping to build national capacity to tackle poverty and other key Copenhagen commitments. We should acknowledge the leadership shown by Gus Bonth in these respects.