



Statements and Speeches

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EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

An Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to the United Nations Decade for Women, Copenhagen, July 15, 1980.

...There can be no effective development, no real progress within any society which leaves behind half its population. Yet, the chilling reality is that the general global situation of women has worsened. Studies indicate that women are the most unequal among unequals — and this, after five years of conscious effort on the part of us all. Continuing and accelerated change is needed. It is not sufficient for us to meet and discuss and propose measures and programs of action. We need effective follow-up on the recommendations which will emerge from this world conference.

Women are not alone in their struggle for equality and development. The United Nations is engaged in important activities on behalf of women. In this regard, the Centre for Humanitarian Affairs and Social Developments plays a vital role as a catalyst for action in the field of women.

Less than a year ago, the UN established the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. We are confident that it will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of international action by emphasizing areas needing special attention and by minimizing any duplication with existing programs.

Canada is committed to the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women. We will work with other states for the adoption of the Program of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, which is the most important goal of the conference.

Women's groups in Canada have reviewed the plan and have urged me to join with you in striving for its acceptance by all countries here, and for the development of mechanisms for strong, follow-up action by countries and United Nations agencies, mechanisms which will ensure the implementation of the plan. Perhaps the Status of Women Commission could have its functions strengthened to enable it to perform this role.

The time for effective action is now. We have no choice but to move ahead with determination. The 1980s must bring an end to women's social and economic victimization.

It is not easy to redirect those aspects of social, religious, and cultural traditions that are weighted against women's advancement; nor is it simple to change the present under-valuing of women's economic contribution that is supported by certain of these traditions.

In the first years of the Decade, and in some cases even earlier, Canada removed discriminatory language from its laws. That, of course, is not enough. The complex chal-
