

North/South Summit is the most immediate item on the forthcoming North/South agenda and I hope that it will maintain and increase the momentum. But I remain under no illusions that this will be an easy task. I hope you will forgive me for saying that I believe your expectations -- worthy ones, to be sure -- may go well beyond the possibilities.

There is, of course, one specific issue of particular importance at Cancun -- that is the launching of global negotiations at the UN in New York. While it was recognized at the preparatory meetings that there would be no formal link with global negotiations, it was agreed that a major objective of the Cancun Summit would be to facilitate agreement on them. Canada is hopeful that the Summit will prove to be such a catalyst. But, this would be a procedural, rather than a substantive, advance.

In Canada's view, the North/South Summit will be useful in focusing the attention of world leaders on pressing global economic problems and in increasing understanding of their respective interests and concerns. The Summit cannot itself take decisions on behalf of countries not present, but it can make an important statement of will and perhaps reach a consensus on priorities. This, in turn, would give political impetus to ongoing negotiations in international fora. In this regard, I will ensure that the resolutions emerging from your conference related to the North/South agenda will be examined carefully. They will then have an opportunity to influence Canadian positions at Cancun -- but it would be unrealistic for you to expect any general agreement at Cancun on your issues -- or indeed on any substantive issues.

For the government to involve itself actively in North/South issues, we fully recognize that we will need the support, if not at times the initiative, of the Canadian public. To that end, we will need to facilitate their increased awareness and involvement. This is a key objective of the new Futures Secretariat, the concept for which derived in part from last year's First Global Conference on the Future which was in part sponsored and organized by your association. I am pleased that the Secretariat is now largely in place and has published its first information bulletin. At the same time, I welcome the efforts of numerous other Canadian non-government organizations, including your own, to give North/South issues and, in particular, Canada's role in the future dialogue, the attention it deserves.