

Africa is a paradox of extremes. It is a continent crushed beneath overwhelming problems of development and economic stagnation and yet it is a continent of hope, courage and potential. The depth of human suffering in Africa has seared the conscience of the world. But it is the indomitable African spirit which has made possible the Program for African Recovery which is laying the foundation for a better future. And it is the enormous untapped potential of physical and human resources that is the basis for hope.

Many African governments are now addressing fundamental economic and development problems to put Africa back on the road to recovery and growth. And the international community is supporting these efforts. In this Mid-Term Review, we must now examine how far we have come and where we still need to go.

I approach this Review with realism and with hope. As minister responsible for Canada's development assistance program and for Canada's relations with Africa, I am profoundly aware of the situation there. Since 1985, I have visited many African countries and have listened to African leaders and people. In the last year, following the Francophone and Commonwealth Conferences where I had the opportunity to consult with many African leaders, I travelled to Mali and also to Ethiopia where Canada was participating actively in the coordinated efforts to feed thousands in the face of yet another drought. I have seen both the tragedy and the potential. I have seen what a long, hard road still lies before us.

Africa holds a special place in the Canadian world view. For me personally, and for my Government and the Canadian people, Africa is a high priority and it will remain a high priority. I assure you, we are committed for the long term.

The Report of the Secretary General holds a distressing message: Despite efforts to date, the economic situation in Africa continues to deteriorate. Incremental improvements in overall GDP have not translated into any improvement in the lives of the poor and the hungry. In fact, per capita income has actually fallen. But the problems of Africa are deep and multifaceted and the present vicious circle of deterioration is difficult to arrest. Debt, inadequate financial flows, growing populations, environmental degradation and under-developed human resources are but a few of the challenges facing African governments. And despite continuing world economic growth, Africa's terms of trade continued until recently to deteriorate.