

Introduction

Canadians are deeply concerned about Africa. Africa is confronted with an economic, social and ecological crisis of devastating proportions in which the human cost has been enormous. Yet, the continent has considerable potential in its human and natural resources which can be marshalled to establish the basis for recovery and growth. As a result, Canada has joined with African governments and others in the international community to work together for a brighter future.

Canadian concern for Africa did not begin with the UN Special Session on Africa in 1986. But the Special Session provided a focus for Africans and the international community to make a political commitment to work together to address the continent's fundamental problems. For Africans, it meant a pledge for policy reform. For the international community, it was a pledge to support that reform process through every available means. The Mid-Term Review is an opportunity to assess the efforts to date and their impact on the economic, social and ecological conditions in Africa. More importantly, it is an opportunity for sober reflection, to reset bearings and to renew commitment for the remaining years of the Program.

Progress under the UN Program in the last two years has been slow and the results perhaps disappointing against expectations for an early rebound in economic prospects for the continent. Significant reforms have been put in place by African governments and important new initiatives have been taken by the international community. But the problems of Africa are deeply rooted and will not be resolved easily or quickly. It will take time for the full impact of these measures to penetrate the broad economic, social and ecological environment to allow Africa to begin the slow journey down the road to recovery and growth.

Canadian Efforts to Support the Implementation of UNPAAERD

Over the past several years, the Canadian Government has undertaken a number of measures, both bilateral and multilateral, designed to support African countries as they tackle the challenges of economic adjustment, debt and development. Some extend well before the UN Program of Action was conceived, but they nonetheless continue to form part of Canada's overall effort today to help African governments reach the goals of economic growth and development. Broadly, these measures have involved increased development assistance flows, improvements in aid quality and steps to alleviate the debt burden. Canada has also been actively involved with the