

surplus production in certain developed countries has led to strong competition and depressed prices, while in many areas of the world there is still widespread hunger. A related issue is the developing countries' debt problems which impede their ability to buy food and other essential items. Nor can we forget the increasing difficulties faced by the grain community on the question of international financing.

One bright spot is modern scientific farming which, with the benefit of new technology, improves productivity and our ability to respond to the vagaries of nature. We recognize that governments must develop appropriate policies to encourage the food sector to expand, to facilitate distribution and trade and to strengthen food security for all nations. Any new steps to improve international co-operation in the grains trade must begin through consultation and co-ordination of national policies as they affect this vital field of international commerce. Here the Wheat Council has a significant continuing role.

Tomorrow's program for the Centennial Forum is designed to help anticipate the future, to look beyond current grains issues facing governments, in order that policies may be developed to safeguard and encourage the vital food grains sector. That is the grains challenge as we see it.

In deciding to invite you to Ottawa this week, my cabinet colleagues and I believed that it was important to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Wheat Council and to acknowledge the role that the Council has played in encouraging international co-operation in grain matters. We also felt that the Council's normal activities should be expanded on this occasion, and this is how the Centennial Forum came about. We have a distinguished panel of speakers to help us examine the future and to suggest the directions for policies. We are confident that the all participants will benefit from this initiative and that the ideas put forward will be discussed at future meetings of the Council and elsewhere.

I am therefore pleased to convey to you, on behalf of the Canadian government, my best wishes for a successful Centennial Forum. I hope that you will enjoy your stay in Ottawa and that these discussions will provide new ideas to enhance international co-operation in the grains sector in the years ahead.