

A time for rededication to UNESCO

Minister for External Relations Monique Vézina led the Canadian delegation to the twenty-third general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Sofia, Bulgaria, October 8 to November 12. Describing UNESCO as a "key element of the UN system" in a speech to the general congress, Mrs. Vézina said the agency is also "a 'test case' for that system and for its reform". Following are excerpts from her speech:

The multilateral system has an essential, indeed a critical, place in Canada's foreign policy. It complements our bilateral relations and gives a middle power like Canada the opportunity to enlarge its scope and influence. We support multilateralism strongly. We have an interest in its efficiency and its effectiveness. We are constantly seeking ways to help renew it and ensure that progress in the UN reflects the changing demands of its members.

Essential for all

Canada's commitment to the ideals and the mandate of UNESCO is unaltered. We need a UNESCO. The world needs a UNESCO. It represents a key element in the UN system.

Today though, UNESCO is somewhat representative of the general state of affairs in the UN. It has been called a "test case" for that system and for its reform and so it is. Its rapid growth in membership — at 160 member states, it is now one of the largest specialized agencies — has ended the automatic majority of Western countries.

UNESCO is not alone among inter-governmental institutions in facing problems. But UNESCO's problems are more visible. We need to improve its perfor-

mance, to show that it can do its job and that its job is worth doing.

In Canada's view, the reform momentum is now on track. It is engaged. We hope it is firmly engaged.

For example:

- the draft program and budget for the next biennium represents a great improvement over previous such documents;
- it is based on the principle of zero real growth with no increased assessments attributable to the withdrawal of member states — a key achievement in Canada's view;
- greater precision and discipline in program and budget presentation are evident throughout;
- there is more program concentration yet more decentralization of activities;
- a central evaluation unit has been established and evaluation procedures are showing signs of improvement;
- the temporary committee's recommendations on administrative, financial and managerial reform — and a timetable for their implementation — will or should produce changes all member states will welcome and support.

But the reform is not entrenched and much more hard work lies ahead. Further substantive changes will be required....

It is the member states which are UNESCO — which run UNESCO — and it is for us to take the hard decisions. This means accelerated co-operation among and across all the regional groups. It means that moderation and good sense must prevail. This in turn requires compromise and the realization that 1985 — this conference — is the beginning of what must be a long but steady process towards revitalization....

Programs supported

I want to underline the importance Canada attaches to the organization's endeavours in the fields of science, of status of women, and of education.

Looking just at the major program in the sphere of education — adult education, literacy programs, democratization and improvement in basic education, equalization of access for girls and women, education of the handicapped, and so on — Canada has participated actively in defining these programs, and supports them with enthusiasm....

Canada also believes that reform means compressing and at the same time strengthening UNESCO's programs, not only to match its reduced financial circumstances but also to ensure its future vitality.

Canada has worked hard to help bring UNESCO this far, to show that the test case can be won. If we fail to maintain, indeed accelerate, the existing momentum for reform, the loss will not be confined to UNESCO. The United Nations family as a whole will suffer.

If we succeed, it augurs well for the future of the multilateral system as a whole — and for continued international co-operation in all of UNESCO's areas of expertise.



From left: Canada's Ambassador to Bulgaria John Fraser, Minister for External Relations Monique Vézina and Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UNESCO Ian Clark greet other delegates at the UNESCO general conference in Sofia.

Aid for Colombia disaster

The government of Canada has announced its support of the disaster relief efforts to assist the victims of the recent eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in Colombia.

Through the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada is providing a grant of \$60 000 to the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator's Office and a grant of \$250 000 to a number of international organizations and the government of Colombia for relief efforts. A further \$100 000 is being donated in the form of blankets, water containers and emergency medical supplies.

Canada is also responding to an urgent request from the government of Colombia for seismological and scientific equipment and supporting technicians to monitor seismic activity associated with the volcanic eruptions.