

in Canada and that Arabs like to meet and know the people they are dealing with. We need frequent visits by ministers and officials of our government and a greater exchange of well prepared trade missions. These efforts must be underpinned by the ongoing work of our Embassies in the region. Our approach must be more systematic than it has been in the past. We have already established joint economic committees with Israel, Saudi Arabia and Algeria. I believe the government could usefully investigate whether the use of this and other consultative mechanisms could be extended to other countries. This, however, would not be a substitute for frequent personal contact at high levels.

In addition to strictly commercial activities Canadians have traditionally had concerns for countries less materially fortunate than themselves. We could consider, as resources permit, some expansion in our development assistance programmes in the Middle East and North Africa. In doing so we must define Canada's role in the continuing economic development of countries whose recent economic growth has moved them from the low to middle income category but who still require development assistance from the industrialized countries. Our role, however, should not be related strictly to the amount of money we can contribute directly but also to the technical and managerial skills we can make available in the area. The Middle East has a number of well-financed aid agencies which may for the time being be short of technical expertise that Canadians have. The possibility of expanding co-operation between Canada and these aid agencies could usefully be examined. We could thus expand the scope and usefulness of our development efforts in the region considerably beyond what would be possible from our own financial resources alone.

In most of the region, there is little information and cultural exchange with Canada. While we already have a vigorous flow of talent and resources between Israel and Canada this is in large part the result of the close affinity between our two peoples. As a consequence activities have not required a high degree of direct government involvement. However, I believe the government should continue to encourage these rich interchanges with Israel.

Our involvement in the Arab countries has been much less extensive in information and cultural exchanges but I am convinced the opportunity exists there to foster better knowledge and understanding. In a number of countries and especially in North Africa our French-speaking heritage and our links with other parts of the francophone world constitute an important asset. As to the region as a whole, better mutual knowledge of the region and of Canada can help to reduce the misunderstandings that come from vague and perhaps distorted impressions. But if we are to undertake cultural and information programs successfully we must have sufficient funds available to continue such activities over