

distress of the poorest in developing countries. Indeed, given the stock situation, production prospects and changes in demand patterns in the middle-income developing countries, in the World Bank it is felt that there could be a serious food crisis in the next few years if, for example, there were two bad harvests in North America. Over time, the only real solution is to reverse the declining ability of developing countries to feed themselves, to find ways greatly to increase world-wide production.

Although only a symptom of broader malaise, the plight of refugees in many parts of the developing world is a source of instability and a legitimate claim on the conscience of mankind; Summit countries cannot avoid reaffirming the leadership they have provided on this subject in recent years.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is clear that the principle focus in the Western Summits will undoubtedly remain on the major economic issues confronting them and the rest of the world including the complex of issues known as the North/South dialogue. But political and economic issues do not exist in watertight compartments. I cannot imagine leaders, who in their everyday work move easily from one issue to another and endeavour to see the relationship among those issues whether economic or political, artificially compartmentalizing their work in a Summit context. At the same time, an overly "political" approach raises issues such as whether the group is the right one for the problem under consideration and may cause overlap with other bodies. Moreover, Summit leaders have clearly indicated that there are a number of basic problems in our economies, such as inflation, energy, trade, on which they must focus. Yet they are conscious that the major political issues facing the West, and particularly but not only the over-all relationship between East and West, cannot be divorced from questions of economic health and prosperity. The lack of consensus on such important political problems can weaken the West and, as evidenced at Venice, no other forum provides quite the same perspective for broad consideration of such subjects.

If these Economic Summits to date have been able to avoid some of the major potential pitfalls and weaknesses of some other Summit meetings, it may be in part because they have not been institutionalized or set up a permanent secretariat. They have remained flexible and informal and responsive in large part to the evolving requirements of the heads of state and government. To the extent to which these leaders wish to make a more useful and cohesive instrument of Summits, they risk becoming a court of last resort, a forum to which problems are passed up from below and that is seen as a place for decision-making on more and more specific items. It is our hope that Ottawa will make its contribution to finding the fine line between over-institutionalization on the one hand and only general discussion on the other so that Western leaders can make the most of this new diplomatic phenomenon, in the interests of their own countries and the rest of the world.

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