

The unanimity which underpinned the recommendations of SCEAIT made our task both easy and demanding. The report could not but reflect the collective views of the aid constituency in Canada, a large and vocal group for which I really think I am the spokesperson in government. Thus the government took up the challenge and we readily endorsed the three principles which SCEAIT suggested form the basis of our aid policy.

First, there is the primary focus on assistance to the poorest countries and people of the world. We demonstrated recently in Québec City, at the Francophone Summit, that these were not just words for us but that we could match our words with deeds. On that occasion we cancelled \$325 million worth of public official assistance debt owed to us by French speaking African nations and pledged \$17 million in new aid projects in these countries.

Secondly, the emphasis is on strengthening human and institutional capacities in developing countries. Again, Canada's official development assistance programs have stressed and will increasingly emphasize the creation of the economic and social infrastructures conducive to the development of human capacities and management abilities. For instance, our Women in Development Plan of Action is inspired by this concept.

Thirdly, SCEAIT suggested that development priorities should always prevail in establishing program objectives. I believe that although we have never forgotten Canadian businessmen's interests in furthering trade through aid, neither have we ever let commercial interests override developmental priorities.

We see the participation of the Canadian business community in the delivery of our aid programs much in the same way as we see the involvement of the non-profit sector into it: it is a matter of both quality and dedication in responding, ultimately, to the needs of developing countries. Of course, I also know very well that when it comes to quality and dedication, our business sector is second to none.