

As you know, Mr. Commissioner, Canada, like Nigeria, is a bilingual and multicultural country, with a very large territory and therefore many distinct provinces and regions. The Government of Canada is firmly convinced that all these language groups, provinces or regions, must continue to enhance their own identity within the framework of the Canadian federal system. There again, our two countries have much in common, for your government is also dedicated, Mr. Commissioner, to unity and faith within the Nigerian national framework.

Through the years, Canadians have also found much to agree with and support in the foreign policy for which you are responsible, be it at the United Nations, in the Commonwealth or within the several African institutions where Nigeria plays a leading role. You have stated your goals and principles firmly, but you have strived to achieve or implement them in a flexible and pragmatic fashion, mindful of the constraints of action and respectful of international law and the rights of other countries. Our two leaders will have once again an opportunity to act in concert at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, at the end of the month. In your own West Africa you have patiently built bridges between the English and French speaking countries established after the colonial period and attempted to reinstate in a contemporary mould the co-operation that was traditional between the peoples of the area. In this respect, I was pleased to learn that your long-standing efforts to establish a West African economic community are now very close to fruition.

As you know, Mr. Commissioner, the Government of Canada has begun some time ago to adapt its foreign policy to a new set of realities and conditions. Some of these realities are internal to our own society; Canadians have become more conscious, in recent years, of their own national identity and of the need to project it more forcefully on the world scene. But we also have become very much aware of the changes which are under way in the international environment. The most significant of these changes, perhaps, is the rapid emergence of developing countries in the concert of nations.

The dramatic political initiatives taken recently by the third world at the United Nations and its agencies, particularly their call for a new economic order, may have taken some by surprise; but in fact, they are an integral part of the historical movement triggered by decolonization and the accession to independence of African and Asian peoples.

Although we support the efforts of third world countries to accelerate their development and bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth in the world, we have been somewhat concerned by the strains which some of these initiatives have placed upon international institutions: