

1992. Since the issue of refugees lies at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, I can assure you that we take our role in chairing this working group very seriously.

There are more than 650 000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Syria alone. Many of them fled their homes over 45 years ago. If we really wish to create a "new" Middle East, one that is at peace, with prosperity and security for all of its people, we must achieve a fair and equitable settlement of the refugee question. Refugees must reap their own peace dividends, the possibility of living with dignity and a recognized identity, and of playing a full and active role in this new Middle East to which we aspire and for which we are working as energetically as possible.

The Working Group on Refugees offers encouraging prospects. In addition to hosting two of its six meetings, Canada led an international mission this year to refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon, and contributed \$1.3 million to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) program to construct emergency shelters for the homeless in the Beirut area, and an added \$2.3 million for other projects in camps in these countries and in Syria.

While taking part in the other four working groups, Canada brought together senior naval officers of 10 Middle Eastern countries last month in Nova Scotia. In February 1994, it hosted the multilateral steering group.

I am confident that progress on the issue of the Golan and southern Lebanon will soon allow Syria and Lebanon to join in this multilateral task of historical significance. Their involvement is essential in seeking acceptable solutions to issues such as that of refugees. It is their future that is at stake, and the international community needs the active collaboration of Damascus and Beirut.

Canadian Assistance to the Peace Process - The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

CIDA's assistance program is another tangible expression of Canada's active role in the peace process. Among other things, CIDA has established a \$2.5-million Canadian fund for experts and services to mobilize Canadian expertise in the service of peacebuilding.

A \$2.1-million Canadian fund for dialogue and development also allows the organization of workshops and seminars to bring together representatives of communities that have historically been enemies to discuss development issues. Several meetings have been held in Lebanon. These contributions are in addition to \$55-million commitments to the West Bank and Gaza over a