

I hope that I have been able to give you some idea of the comprehensive nature of Canada's response to the severe refugee problem around the world. As you have seen, Canada plays a major role and is deeply involved in all areas of refugee issues. Whether it be resettlement, humanitarian assistance, political initiatives at the UN or the institutional affairs of the international agencies concerned with refugee issues, our overall response can give Canadians reason to be proud. This response would not have been possible without the moral support of the Canadian people, especially those who have, through their active personal commitment to the cause of assisting refugees, set an example to be followed.

The refugee situation is not, however, one that should lead us to any sense of complacency. As I noted earlier, the prospects for the global refugee situation are not encouraging. Given the magnitude of the problem, there is always more that can be done. It is, first and foremost, a humanitarian challenge to the world, and it is the responsibility of the international community to provide adequate support in every sphere. In this respect, it is regrettable to note that only about one half of the members of the UN have ratified either or both the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol concerning the protection of refugees. This fact is not cause for pride. These legal instruments are among the most important the United Nations has elaborated in the humanitarian field.

At its most basic level, the refugee problem is a complex, difficult and often politically-charged issue. Canada certainly does not expect that solutions will easily be found, nor that refugee problems will disappear overnight. The various aspects of the whole question must be approached realistically if we are to make effective progress. If, however, we examine the human misery and misfortune and the socio-economic costs of the global refugee situation of the last few years, the importance of this issue and the imperative is clear. The Government of Canada remains committed to pursuing its traditional and active humanitarian role in refugee questions and will continue to search for solutions to this problem that afflicts so many millions of people around the globe.