

Mr. President:

HABITAT will thread a new design in the fabric of the global aspirations of the community of man. Conferences, such as ours, dealing with socio-economic problems of concern to the whole of humanity are a new phenomenon in international life. They reflect the quest for greater equality and justice among nations and individuals made more pressing than ever by decolonization, the assertion of human rights, and the spread of modern technology and communication.

HABITAT has its origin in a proposal advanced by Canada at the Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. The quality of the environment, we were convinced, had to be matched by the quality of human life. Since then, the international community has endeavoured to come to grips with other basic aspects of the human condition on our earth. Those aspects that have the most direct bearing on the problems of human settlements were population, which was discussed at Bucharest in 1973; food, at Rome in 1974; and development, raw materials and economic cooperation, notably at the Sixth and Seventh Special Sessions of the General Assembly in New York. Out of this cumulative confrontation and harmonization of widely diverging national experiences and aspirations is slowly but unmistakably emerging a body of concepts and values which find a growing universal resonance.

HABITAT, our Conference dedicated to human settlements, will be expected, as Barbara Ward has said, to address the most vital and urgent needs of the millions of human beings who are living - and dying - in conditions that can only be described as inhuman. It will aim at mobilizing the necessary spirit of cooperation and political will, and at establishing innovative forms of sharing knowledge, experience, and essential ways and means towards more effective national and international action.

Canada wholeheartedly endorses the fundamental recommendation before the conference that national governments should establish a human settlement policy as an essential component of an overall national strategy of socio-economic development. This proposition, it seems to us, is valid regardless of the political ideology and of development of the country concerned.

In the past, improvements in living conditions have been seen as a consequence of development, as a benefit to be derived from advances in the more productive elements of the economy. I believe that this conference will recognize and proclaim that the creation of adequate living conditions and building of better settlements are the basic foundation of any real and meaningful development. To produce more, our farmers, our miners, our industrial workers and our office workers must have decent shelter, food, health services, education and the other elements which maintain and improve the human condition and happiness.