

constructs and equips schools. It devotes considerable effort to promoting equal access to education for girls and women, the handicapped and the elderly, and to improving education in rural areas.

One of UNESCO's major educational tasks coincides with the priorities of our government and with those of the provincial and territorial governments. The United Nations General Assembly has declared 1990 to be International Literacy Year. Activities are being prepared by the provinces and territories throughout Canada to contribute concretely toward achieving the objectives of this event.

The strategies planned for this year are designed to increase public awareness, to improve existing programs and to encourage various partners, both existing and new, to plan and to introduce innovative projects to combat illiteracy.

In another area, UNESCO encourages the development of the natural and social sciences throughout the world, by supporting thousands of projects.

UNESCO is also involved in culture, an area of great importance to the Canadian government. An affirmation of cultural identity is essential to the international community. We must learn to share our cultural resources. UNESCO's intervention to preserve the historic sites in Venice, Athens and Carthage have benefited all of mankind.

UNESCO has also shown its ability to adapt to new realities. Mankind has now entered the era of global communication, a fact which UNESCO, like Canada, has been prompt to recognize. From experience Canada understands the crucial link that exists between communication and development, and places high priority on this relationship in its cooperation with the countries of the Third World.

Human rights is also an area of heavy involvement for UNESCO. I would first like to point out that UNESCO's human rights activities coincide with Canadian values in this regard. In fact, human rights is a subject that lies at the heart of Canadian democratic life. The issues arising from respect for and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms are woven into the very fabric of daily life in Canada.

By affirming its status of member state in UNESCO, Canada intends to help fulfill the vision of the organization shared by those who created it. Canada supports the Director General as he endeavours to reform the body. It was in this spirit that Canada offered its candidacy for the Executive Board at the next session of the General Conference.