

For example, I was particularly moved when I flew over the Tana River in Kenya, which 20 years before was an area of beauty and fertility. Nourished by the river, the watershed area supported many small African farms not prosperous ones, by our standards but decent farms out of which people were earning decent livelihoods.

Flying down to the beautiful white sands of Malindi, which I am sure some of you have experienced one of the great resort areas of Kenya 20 years later you see that the trees have disappeared, the soil has eroded and only a few farmers are now scrambling for a meagre living in what was a relatively productive area. The river itself is laden with soil, which has destroyed the river fisheries. Then, as you move out to the coast, you see a great red cloud of mud in the ocean. The formerly crystal clear water is no longer clear. The beaches are covered with a residue of brown mud that had once been productive soil.

So you destroy the farmer, you destroy the woodlands, you destroy the river fisheries and you destroy the tourist resort. Meanwhile, the population that claims those resources as their means of livelihood expands and grows.

This is a graphic picture of the developing world. There are some bright spots in it, of course, but this ominous drama is unfolding throughout the developing world, threatening a massive human eco-tragedy beyond anything ever witnessed. The grim portents of this can be seen in the recurring famines in Africa.

The pressures of population growth traditionally have been mitigated by migration, but today all the habitable places of our planet are included within the boundaries of nation states, most of which today are closing their borders to newcomers. Large-scale migration can no longer be seen as a solution to overpopulation or to accommodating refugees from conflict and economic crisis.

Yet the pressures for migration are increasing, and countries like Canada, with living space and stable economies, are inevitably going to have vast numbers of impoverished or dispossessed people knocking at their doors.