

gathering produce speedy action, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, invited the participants to return to Canada's capital one year later to sign a global treaty banning landmines. Some 122 countries accepted the invitation and signed the Ottawa Convention on December 3 and 4, 1997. It became the most rapidly ratified international treaty ever when it came into force on March 1, 1999.

Canada is proud of the momentum created through the Ottawa Process toward a global ban on landmines. To act on its commitment, it has pledged \$100 million over five years to create the Canadian Landmine Fund, which is being used to further the goals of the Ottawa Convention (Section 6). For regular updates on Canadian mine action, visit the Safe Lane Web site at www.mines.gc.ca.

Economic and social development

Sustainable development is a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy. Canada sees the United Nations and the UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies (where it plays a leading role) as key instruments for promoting economic and social development. Canada was and is very active in the UN reform process; we want the administrative savings achieved by the different funds and programmes to be applied as "development dividends" to finance the alleviation of poverty and economic growth generation in developing countries.

Through bilateral assistance and participation in UN funds, programmes

and institutions, as well as in the regional development banks, Canada has supported African development for many years. We have been a leading player in addressing the problem of debt: we were among the first to forgive the official development assistance (ODA) debt of the least-developed and other poor countries, and were equally prompt in reducing the debts of the poorest highly-indebted countries. We have a long tradition of development assistance in Asia and are active partners in building new forms of co-operation in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and other regional forums. Further, Canada is a full partner in Latin American and Caribbean development, and we maintain an active program of assistance to Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in order to assist in their transition to democracy and market economies.

Environment

Solving environmental problems is a top international priority for Canadians. Canada is a leader on the issue of biodiversity, and was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity. Montréal was chosen as the site for the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention.

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, Canada played a strong role in developing the Forest Principles. Since then, Canada has launched the International Model Forest Programme, the Montréal Criteria and Indicators Process, and the Intergovernmental Working Group on Forests



CIDA photo: David Barbour