

UN Special Session on Africa

President Diouf of Senegal, while President of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was instrumental in convincing the international community to hold a Special Session of the United Nations on the critical situation in Africa. The Special Session was held in New York city on May 27-31, 1986. African governments committed themselves to pursue major economic and institutional reforms, and donor governments agreed to make every effort to provide sufficient resources to support and supplement the African development effort. The UN is charged with monitoring and facilitating the process.

At the Special Session, Canada provided strong support for the recovery and development of Africa and announced new measures designed to help face the challenge of the situation.

- An initiative called Africa 2000 was announced to increase Canadian participation in some 2000 new projects at the grassroots level. A special five-year \$150 million recovery fund was established for that purpose.
- Canada instituted a moratorium on the repayment of official development assistance (ODA) loans for an initial period of five years and indicated its willingness to extend this measure in five-year segments until the year 2000. (The value of the repayments on this type of debt due to Canada is estimated at approximately \$255 million).
- A decision was also taken shortly before the Special Session that all new development assistance projects would be financed by grants instead of loans.

Canada's Ambassador to the UN, Stephen Lewis, played a prominent role in achieving a consensus at the UN Special Session as President of the Committee that prepared the final document of the Session. Ambassador Lewis has, moreover, been appointed Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General in the effort to focus international attention on Africa's need for increased resource flows and to encourage appropriate policy reforms and adjustments by African countries.