

development assistance.

- Canadian aid and development agencies, including CIDA, should work with and through the IFIs to coordinate efforts for Nigerian support.

## **VI. Equity, Distribution and Poverty Alleviation**

Several perspectives were offered on the key questions of equity, distribution and poverty alleviation in the current Nigerian context.

Dr. Ezekiel Uche of the Department of Economics in the University of Maiduguri looked at "Assessing the Nigerian Economy: Growth, Distribution and Poverty Alleviation". He noted that there had been a shift in the predominance of agriculture in the Nigerian economy from the 1960s to the 1970s, when oil revenues increased to the extent that the production of both domestic and export agricultural commodities declined. Economic growth from the oil boom has not been consistent, however, and the economy has been characterized by negative growth rates even with strong oil exports. Mismanagement of oil revenues has led to high inflation rates and the creation of a negative atmosphere for investment. The service and speculative economy has grown but without substantial widespread benefits for economic performance. Inequality in income distribution has increased, leading to dwindling real disposable incomes and rising malnutrition rates. Education and health services have declined. Various poverty indices show clearly that both absolute and relative poverty rates are rising. Current poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria have arisen to cushion effects of structural adjustment since 1986, and to build support for various sectors, but with limited success. Therefore, the elimination of endemic poverty is a key component of the transition to democratic governance models.

Amina Salihu of the Department of Political Science at Ahmadu Bello University presented a paper entitled on "Enhancing Women's Participation in Policy Making: Gender Dimensions and Policy Options". She noted that both Nigeria's colonial history as well as the predominance of patriarchal social structures (reinforced by military rule) has led to the exclusion of women from policy making opportunities. While in theory there are some constitutional guarantees for women's equal participation and representation, in practice gender-sensitive policy analysis is rare. Equity and justice in the allocation of natural resources should therefore pay particular attention to women. Inclusion of women in the policy process could include promotion of affirmative action for women, projects to support women's special initiatives, equal employment opportunities in the private sector, better access to information, and support for