

reaffirmed its position in this respect. The Organization for African Unity, which is duly recognized as a regional organization of the United Nations, has been actively seeking to bring the two sides together for peace negotiations, and those endeavors are continuing.

It is unfortunate that the Secretary of State for External Affairs is unable to be here today to give us his views on the motion before the House. So many of his activities, especially in the past few months, have centered around the conflict in Nigeria. Elsewhere I will mention his discussions with Mr. Stewart and Mr. Gromyko about arms shipments to the area. He has also had many opportunities in Ottawa and in New York to have talks about Nigeria with the foreign ministers of other countries, including a number from the African continent. Hon. Members will also recall the visits to Ottawa of two distinguished African leaders, President Diiori of Niger and President Nyerere of Tanzania. These meetings confirmed the view of the Government that Canada should continue to concentrate on the humanitarian problems and that a dramatic peace initiative on the part of Canada would not help get peace talks started. Indeed, such an action might have an effect opposite to that intended. Rather, it has been the Minister's resolve that Canada should be ready and willing to grasp opportunities to be useful in ameliorating the situation, as in Canada's continuing participation on the observer team, or in helping to bring about peace negotiations. But until peace comes the humanitarian problem of relieving the suffering of war must be faced. In the absence thus far of any role Canada could play in resolving the complexities of Nigeria's internal struggle, the Government has concentrated on helping to mitigate its tragic consequences. Unfortunately, the effort made by the population of Canada cannot be compared favorably to that of other countries.

Like most other governments, we have made our relief contributions available through the organization which has always served with such distinction and efficiency in relief distribution throughout the world — the Red Cross. Through the Canadian Red Cross Society and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Government has contributed almost \$3 million to relief for victims of the Nigerian conflict and, of this, almost one half in the Biafran area.

I need not dwell here on the complexities and frustrations which have beset all efforts to get relief supplies through to the suffering. The relief programs which the Red Cross has co-ordinated on both sides of the fighting lines have been persistently pursued in the face of acute physical risks, formidable political complications and monumental administrative difficulties. The most severe problems, naturally, have concerned efforts to deliver desperately-needed supplies of food and drugs to suffering civilians in the secessionist enclave, surrounded as it is by Nigerian Government forces. And as the conflict has been prolonged, the tragedy of its impact on those innocent people has assumed ever more desperately urgent proportions in our relief efforts. In his statement to the House on November 25, the Prime Minister outlined the persistent efforts which this Government and other donor governments have made, in co-ordination with and in support of the ICRC, to break the tragic impasse which obstructs the expansion of relief deliveries. I suggest that, when we examine this record of relief delivery efforts — efforts massively supported by many governments and organizations which share Canada's concern about the suffering in Nigeria —, we cannot escape a conclusion which can only be heartrending for all of us who earnestly seek to help relieve that suffering. It is not a conclusion which I derive any satisfaction from stating, but it is the single most relevant fact