

Berger Enquiry. This judicial enquiry, which lasted three years, delved into the social, economic and ecological impact of the construction of the pipeline to bring oil and gas from the far north of Canada and Alaska to the more populated southern regions.

Canada is pleased with the work of UNEP in encouraging sound development plans. Perhaps the most significant recent event was the Desertification Conference held from August 29 to September 9 in Nairobi. The long drought in the Sahelian Region of Africa that began in the late sixties dramatically focussed the attention of the international community upon the disruptive and disturbing consequences of ignoring the natural resource base. The "desert-creep" in this area alone has rendered useless 650,000 square kilometres of land once suitable for agriculture and grazing. Primarily through national and local measures, the plan of action to combat desertification adopted by the Conference aims to arrest this process and, where possible, to reclaim desert land for productive use. In the longer term, this should result in improved living conditions for the 14% of the world's population that lives in the drylands.

We recognize that many of the countries faced with problems of desertification are also among the least developed and, consequently, the international community should accept its responsibility to mobilize financial resources so that proper action can take place. At the Conference, a number of methods were put forward to generate these most needed resources. Canada is ready to continue to provide financial assistance through existing bilateral and multilateral programmes. Last June, Canada had the privilege to host a meeting of the Club des Amis du Sahel, an informal association of major aid donors and the members of the Permanent Interstate Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). At this meeting, the Club adopted a long-term economic development strategy and action programme for the drought-prone Sahel region. The first generation programme (1978-1982) will cost an estimated three billion dollars. The success of this type of financing will be seen in the results. Official aid commitments to the region in 1976 reached about 860 million dollars, almost double the level of assistance committed in 1973.

Turning to the report of UNEP itself, which was so ably introduced by Dr. Telba in his statement last Monday, my delegation would like to register its satisfaction with the business-like and thorough fashion in which the Governing Council conducted the work of the fifth session. The maturing of UNEP as an organization in the U.N. system gives my delegation considerable confidence for the next five years. We are pleased with Dr. Tolba's efforts to set down programme goals for realization by 1982.

Canada believes in the catalytic and coordinating role of UNEP within the U.N. system and is aware of the advances made by UNEP in this direction.

We recognize the programme of UNEP is intended to be a reflection of the environmental activities of the entire U.N. system. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) and other instruments need to continue to monitor and coordinate these activities so that an even closer relationship can be developed between the Secretariats of UNEP and other U.N. bodies.