

INTERNATIONAL POLICY AT A CROSSROADS

Internationally, the response to the tsunami tragedy has revealed a reservoir of global solidarity that could be mobilized for other crucial humanitarian goals. A year of major summits on the future of global governance, 2005 also represents a watershed year for the international community's response to the growing gap between rich and poor. The challenge of development is most acute in Africa, a region that will be in the spotlight for both the G8 and the UN over the coming year. Momentum is building. There is a new consensus both on the targets for poverty reduction and development—represented by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—and on the best means for achieving those targets. The recent reports of the UN High Level Panel and of the UN Secretary-General give further impetus to these efforts by identifying development as the first line of defence in a new global system of collective security.

The time to act is now. Canada's advantages come with the expectation that we fulfill our responsibilities as a global citizen. Our current economic and political standing provides the freedom to make choices about how we will contribute. By investing strategically today, we will maintain our capacity to act in the future. Our unique relationship with the United States does not alone assure Canada's influence in the world. We will set our own course, and pull our own weight. We have proven before that we can adapt and innovate. In 2005—and beyond—we will do so again.

The February 2005 Budget demonstrates the Government's commitment to reinvesting in Canada's international role. But money alone is not enough. Fulfilling this international policy statement requires choices. While Canada is a prosperous and successful liberal democracy, it cannot be effective everywhere. The strategy set out here reflects our continued engagement in defence, diplomacy, commerce and development. But we will no longer spread ourselves thinly across multiple activities, or across every region. Based on a clear understanding of where our interests lie, we will focus on particular threats, particular partners, particular markets and particular institutions. Our goal is to have the capacity to take action, when and where we have a practical policy outcome clearly in view.

We also cannot mistake acting in concert for making a difference. Reforming the world's multilateral system of governance will be a priority for Canada, but it cannot become an end in itself. For Canadians, and for others around the globe, it is results that ultimately matter. Therefore, the Government of Canada's efforts will be directed to solving specific problems. We will be selective in our actions and committed to our goals. We will work across issue areas, creating new forms of cooperation between Canada and other nations, within and across government departments, and with globally active Canadians.