

Immigration

Canada is a country with a diversity of cultures and groups. Men and women from all over the world have built our country, and we are proud of it. Our record of assisting refugees has been a good one. But we recognize that even these efforts pale in the face of the millions of world refugees seeking new homes. Women immigrants and refugees have their own particular difficulties and we are increasingly aware that better assistance is required to meet their needs — better language training and better settlement programs to help them and their families integrate more easily into the community. But the problem of refugees is becoming one of major significance in the international arena. Several initiatives and commitments must be made to come to grips with the political and economic reality of vast numbers of people uprooted from their traditional homes. This is an area where we must take a stand.

Refugees

This conference will consider the specific problems of refugee women, who comprise the majority of the ten-million refugee population throughout the world. These women have suffered the tragedy of disrupted family life; many have lost their families. We cannot consider their difficulties in a vacuum but within the context of the over-all situation. Their problems are, nevertheless, particularly pressing. I think for example, of the high proportion of women and children among Afghan refugees in Pakistan and among the refugees in Somalia and also of the brutal attacks against women fleeing Vietnam by sea.

We must intensify our international efforts to resolve the situations which are producing refugees and to find homes for those displaced or in refugee encampments. Similarly, we must also support international efforts towards the elimination of *apartheid* and towards a just and peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

Our views on the causes of these conflicts and on possible remedies may diverge but what is important is that this conference should avoid polemics and instead strive in a positive and constructive spirit to work out a comprehensive and practical plan of action. Only in this fashion will the conference succeed in impressing upon the competent political organs of the international community the urgent necessity of creating conditions which will permit the extension of the benefits of this plan to women everywhere in the world.

United Nations

With reference to the Voluntary Fund, the Canadian International Development Agency will review specific projects for contribution in the bilateral programs within mutually established country program priorities and available resources.

Canada's ability to contribute to the implementation of the Decade program has been enhanced by our election to the Status of Women Commission. We intend to work towards a much stronger integration of women's concerns in the activities of UN agencies. More specifically, we seek support for a position which urges the systematic meshing and dove-tailing of concerns and objectives for the Decade Plan of Action with the other major programs of the UN for a greater impact.

We will be examining the positions of our own delegations to UN conferences to ensure that our concerns at a national level are reflected in our international activities.