



# Statements and Speeches

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## CANADA'S ROLE IN AFRICA

A Speech by the Honourable Charles Lapointe, Minister of State for External Relations, to the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Ottawa, April 12, 1983

I am very pleased to be able to talk to you today about Canada's role in Africa. I have often noticed how closely African affairs are tied in with every aspect of our foreign policy.

This is not surprising, especially when one considers the future. Canada has close relations with the United States, Europe and Japan — the industrialized countries that are the greatest economic and political powers. It is also forming increasingly closer relations with the Third World — relations that are already having quite an effect on our economic and political interests. I would like to discuss the reasons why Canada is becoming more and more active on the African continent.

But let us first look at some basic information as it applies to Africa and Canada. Africa is a developing continent, in the strictest sense of the word. With an area of 30 million square kilometres, Africa is the depository of vast undeveloped natural resources. It will soon have a population of half a billion. The 50 countries that it comprises represent almost a third of the world's sovereign states. They form the majority of the Francophone countries and almost half the non-aligned movement. They are an important group in the Arabic and Islamic worlds and in the Commonwealth. With its great physical and human resources, Africa will of necessity be called upon to play an increasingly crucial role in world affairs.

Africa is also facing some serious problems. I am not referring only to the conflicts that are shaking the continent in Southern Africa, the Western Sahara or the Horn of Africa. Africa's main problems are those of development, and they exist in every domain. Most of its countries suffer from economic vulnerability, the fragility of their institutions and the social tensions related to these factors and to their cultural and ethnic diversity. But Africa is a developing continent, and although it contains many deprived countries, there are also centres of growth, dynamic regions and capable peoples and governments who, with courage and dignity, are successfully going about building their countries. When I think of Africa, I think of it as a first-rate partner for Canada.

What are Canada's basic economic and political realities? We have an economy centred both on development of our natural resources and diversified industrial production. With a relatively small domestic market, we are compelled to base our prosperity on foreign trade. This allows us to produce more and to sell our products,

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