

## BACKGROUND

### CANADA'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Canada's official presence in Africa dates back more than 30 years and spans the entire continent, with Canadian officials posted in 21 African countries. Canada's presence recently expanded with the opening of an embassy in Namibia in 1990, our participation in United Nations peacekeeping exercises in Western Sahara and Angola, and our active participation in humanitarian assistance programs in the Horn of Africa. More than 20 African countries have also sought Canada's constitutional and electoral expertise in the past two years.

Since the late 1950s, the most visible aspect of our relations with African countries has been our official development assistance. Bilaterally, this assistance totals nearly \$7 billion, apart from our significant contributions to other programs and to international organizations. Canada's commitment to Africa remains a priority, and indicative planning figures for bilateral development assistance over the next five years could total several billion dollars. This would be complemented by other related programs and our contributions to multilateral organizations, of which Africa will continue to receive a considerable share.

The unselfish co-operation of Canadians with Africa is rooted in the missionary activities of Canadian religious institutions at the turn of the century. The presence of Canadian non-governmental organizations in Africa has also been a significant phenomenon and continues to play an important complementary role in humanitarian and development assistance. As well, a growing number of African students come to Canada to complete their education.

Economically, our highly diversified trade in goods, equipment and services has totalled more than \$40 billion over the same three decades. The late 1970s and early 1980s were the most active period. Our level of trade has since remained steady, totalling \$2.2 billion in 1990 and \$1.5 billion for the first nine months of 1991.

An important aspect of our relations with African countries is undoubtedly the political dialogue that we maintain bilaterally as well as multilaterally in international organizations. Specific events and national crises have led Canada to multiply its diplomatic contacts with various countries. Canada has also actively supported the search for solutions to conflicts in Africa. This dialogue extends far beyond political institutions to social, economic, cultural and technical fields. Canada's