

have been made. Yet, the challenges remain overwhelming. Moreover, we have, with our friends in those countries, realized that speedy disbursement of development assistance funds can often be more difficult than expected. This has also been the experience for multilateral programmes to which Canada contributes over a third of its current development assistance budget of 1.1 billion dollars for this fiscal year. Yet, difficulties in disbursement should not in any way discourage even greater efforts.

In this regard, I should like to endorse the statement made by the Representative of the FAO that the IFAD agreement needs as a complement continued bilateral assistance in the area of agricultural development. Canada continues to regard rural development as an area of concentration for our aid programmes. The good harvests of the last three years should not obscure the need to work for world food security which can only be achieved by a three-pronged attack -- buffer stocks against future poor harvests, intensified agricultural development and food aid to cover immediate shortfalls.

We encourage all countries in a position to offer material support to the developing countries to do so. We have heard that some countries consider themselves to be exempt from this obligation on the basis that they are not ex-colonial powers. While such argumentation is open to debate, still more important, it is not relevant to the urgent needs of the development process. My country's only direct experience with the colonial system has been as a colony. Yet, we recognize and accept our responsibility, indeed privilege, to share in the process of development for the well-being of all. The important, over-riding, consideration is that we all recognize our obligations to the world community, to work toward an orderly, just and equitable world economic system, as a matter of urgency, but as a continuing process of change. We must at the same time also concentrate in the shorter term on direct development assistance to help out the neediest people in developing countries, and the poorest countries among us. Canada is committed to move toward the 0.7% target and we encourage all other countries in a position to do so to move in the same direction.

In response to developing countries' needs for additional official development assistance and as a major contribution to the one billion dollar special action programme in CIEC for the poorest countries, the Canadian Government converted into grants all past development loans to a number of least developed countries. The amount converted is in excess of a quarter of a billion dollars. Furthermore, Canadian Government Development Assistance to the least developed countries is now entirely on a grant basis. It was therefore of great interest to us to hear the remarks in this regard by the distinguished Swedish Minister of Overseas Development.

In the next few years we must construct a comprehensive strategy to overcome the fundamental problems at the source of the development process, and relate the external economic environment and system to this process. We have made considerable progress in the past two decades, and particularly in the last few years, but the world community's most lasting accomplishments in favour of developing countries still lie ahead.