

I Regional Activities

Africa and the Middle East

These regions, comprising part of the world's largest continent and all of the second-largest, the birthplace of mankind itself, the cradle of civilization and the crucible of many of its greatest ideas, have continued to be a focus of global concern during 1975. Within this vast area stretching from the Caucasus and steppes of Central Asia to the Atlantic and the Cape of Good Hope lie more than 60 independent states, from some of the oldest to some of the newest, in which live more than 400 million people. Their inhabitants represent a great diversity of cultural and linguistic groups dwelling in flatlands and mountains, deserts and rain forests. Here are to be found some of the greatest reservoirs of natural resources, upon which depends much of the world's industrial activity.

There are in Africa and the Middle East groups of states whose resources, policies and needs command attention in international forums at the present time. The majority of OPEC members and many of the Group of 77 are located in these regions. Thus they present a contrast between some of the world's richest states and many of its poorest. Canada has a variety of relations with this area, in which new forms of assistance evolve, in the face of newly-acquired wealth and widespread poverty, which have produced some of the world's highest and lowest *per capita* incomes. The hopes and aspirations of the regions — politically, economically and culturally — are reflected in the growing influence their components wield within the United Nations and associated institutions. The problems of few other regions pervade the world organization to a greater degree. Interregional and local rivalries, economic and social frustrations and the search for national and cultural identity make Africa and the Middle East regions of continuous instability and unrest.

Although it is located far from these regions, Canada has established relations with most of their states. In Africa these relations have in many instances developed from Commonwealth and La Francophonie connections and out of our own quest for national unity. With rapidly-growing populations, these regions represent large potential markets for Canada's products and technology; Africa, in particular, is an area of concentration for our aid programs to help raise the living standards of its peoples. The search for peace and security, for an improved quality

of life and for social justice have made Africa and the Middle East a focus for the international community's most pressing political problems. Canada, in its relations with African and Middle Eastern states, has demonstrated its anxiety and concern over the Israeli-Arab conflict by its participation in peacekeeping activities and the search for solutions. It has recorded its opposition to unacceptable practices in surviving colonial areas, and to the *apartheid* policies of South Africa.