

Good evening, friends.

It is an honour for me to be the host of this occasion. For several reasons.

You are very distinguished guests. I identify strongly with the purposes of your business. The Government I represent cares strongly about your conclusions.

I am able to say that the objects of your concern - North/South relations, global accommodation, international equity - are at the forefront of the Canadian Government's approach in international affairs. I am also able to say that as a Government, we are committed to the imperatives which motivate the North/South Round Table.

I acknowledge that as the Foreign Minister of the country playing host to an assembly of such high purpose as yours, I could hardly be expected to say any less. But I hope you will take it at face value if I stress that we mean it.

We are committed to the imperative that global solutions have to be found, urgently, to our obvious problems, and to the notion that, as a participant in the process, the Canadian Government has a role of creative responsibility to play.

This is easily said. Far less easily done. For the dialogue which is supposed to apply to your deliberations, and to the world's North/South agenda, is clouded and confused.

On certain aspects of global relations, responsibilities are clear. The responsibility, for example, for the industrialized countries, even in time of economic difficulty, to increase their aid levels to the developing countries whose situations are vastly more hard-pressed. Our Government has done this. We've put our aid budget back on the track of real growth. This is important. It is important to the governments, and through them, the peoples we assist. It also attests to the bona fides of the commitment which the Canadian people is, through its Parliament, making.

I disagree strongly with those who maintain that aid doesn't really aid. I have never heard this argument from representatives of the developing countries and peoples who benefit from assistance. Nor, for that matter, have I heard it from countries or governments which have a record of excellence in giving development assistance. I reject it.

But we all recognize, I think, that aid is not the essential point in the North/South agenda.