

## I. BACKGROUND

**Introduction:** The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) was convened by the United Nations to discuss problems of social development through four core themes: the eradication of poverty; employment; social integration; and national and international enabling environments for social development. One hundred and eighty-six countries attended the Summit, making it one of the largest events of its kind in UN history and 118 of the delegates were at the level of head of state or government.

Discussions were wide-ranging: their outcome was the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The 10 commitments of the Declaration deal with: an enabling environment; poverty eradication; employment; social integration; gender equality; education and culture; Africa and the least-developed countries; structural adjustment; resource utilization; and strengthening social development in the international system. The outcome is the broadest-ever governmental consensus on social development and will influence international social and economic policy for many years to come.

**Conclusions and concepts:** While most WSSD conclusions fall within the parameters of Canadian foreign policy, the WSSD approach to social development may change the way we manage social development in the future. For example, while the international community generally agrees on the need for economic development in countries, it was often assumed that people would benefit as a by-product of growth and sound economic management. The WSSD concluded that people are both the agents and the beneficiaries of economic development, and that without effective social development they can be marginalized in the development process. Apart from encouraging sound macro-economic policy, the WSSD urged countries to improve their commitment to equity and to integrate social policy into economic and environmental policy and planning. The WSSD endorsed a "people-centred" approach: its documents focus throughout on the rights and responsibilities of people.

**Canada's participation and contribution:** Canada was one of a few countries that undertook wide-ranging consultations on the WSSD and supported pre-Summit cross-country consultations with the provinces and by civil society, including individuals, representatives of labour, the private sector, political parties, indigenous groups, community organizations, co-operatives, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, the media, and public information groups. Government and non-governmental consultations benefited from a new dialogue between social policy and international development specialists and activists, to the extent that Canada's outline of the Draft Declaration became the basis of the Copenhagen text.

One of the results of this relationship was the promotion by Canada of new concepts in the four core areas of the Summit. For example, Canada promoted and obtained full international recognition of the contribution made to society by people who perform unremunerated activities, such as household work or subsistence agriculture. The Summit