

QUEBEC REGION, 6 communities, January 21-25 and February 6, 1986

Chicoutimi
Montreal (2)

Quebec
Rimouski

Sherbrooke

The National Forum Africa Conference was held in Ottawa on February 13, 14 and 15 with an eight hour broadcast on the CBC Parliamentary Channel on Saturday, February 15, 1986.

Content

From the very beginning there was concern about how much direction should be given to local discussions. Speakers, panel presentations, resource persons, prepared questions and in some instances preliminary working papers stimulated discussions that led to hundreds of recommendations being made by groups in more than fifty communities. In many communities, as well, action plans were developed to explore such projects as "twinning" and other opportunities for "people to people" involvement with Africans.

Many of the recommendations were similar. They were grouped in thirteen categories:

1. Increased funding for NGOs and recognition that emergency as well as long-term aid is more effectively delivered by non governmental organizations than on a government-to-government basis.
2. The need for increased public education with suggestions for better information and cooperation as well as increased involvement by the education system and the media.
3. Concern with the present practices of tying much of our current bilateral aid to the purchase of Canadian goods and services.
4. Village twinning and similar community-to-community links were identified as particularly valuable for increasing public awareness and community involvement.
5. The issue of armaments versus development with suggestions that Canada assume a leadership role in persuading African states to resolve civil conflict; to cutting military expenditures and increasing aid budgets.
6. The problem of the African debt and the extent to which debt servicing and debt repayment threatens many African economies. Several measures, including rescheduling of payments and forgiving of loans were proposed.