

best way to ensure the access to global market opportunities that the Secretary-General rightly calls for.

Some of the poorest countries continue to struggle with unmanageable debt burdens. Canada fully agrees with the Secretary-General that more substantial measures need to be taken to reduce the debt load of severely indebted countries that adopt appropriate policy reforms. We also need to ensure that development programs reach people who need them. For its part, Canada is committed to providing 25 per cent of our ODA [Official Development Assistance] to basic human needs.

Canadian Reform Priority

The report of the Secretary-General makes important suggestions on broad approaches; there is also a need to be specific on priorities for the UN itself and on internal reorientation. The Agenda for Development is a vehicle for providing inspiration and a framework for the international community as a whole, as well as a blueprint for the UN role. The UN cannot successfully tackle every important issue. The challenge is to ensure that the value of the UN contribution represents more than its small share of financial flows.

Last month, the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, reiterated that Canadian involvement in the UN is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. The very importance we attach to the organization gives us cause to seek accelerated reform in its economic and social sectors.

The Canadian government is itself currently conducting a foreign policy review. The parameters for that review are dictated by available means, the interests of Canadians and relevance. What this means is that we will, in future, need to be more tough-minded about the choices we make. Our resources are limited, as are those of the UN. We must rethink the roles and mandates of all our multilateral institutions, including those of the Bretton Woods. These questions will be taken up at the next G-7 Economic Summit to be held in Halifax, Canada. We want to work on an urgent basis with the UN community as well, because these issues should be debated as widely as possible at every level concerned. The relevance of certain institutions must also be rethought and a real solution must be found to the problem of duplication, including in relation to the specialized agencies.

This is not to suggest that we are oblivious to the progress that has been made in recent years in promoting stronger coherence and direction. At the same time, it is increasingly clear to us that specific reform measures need to be situated in an understanding of the core functions and comparative advantages of the UN.