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UNCTAD makes progress towards reducing disparities between nations

The recent United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi "was, without question, a most important step in the efforts to reduce disparities between developed and developing countries which were initiated at the Seventh Special Session of the United Nations," declared Secretary of State for External Affairs Allan J. MacEachen, in a report to the House of Commons on June 10.

At the Special Session, he continued, Canada had used its resources and influence in a determined effort to help bring about a constructive change in the international economic system and thereby reduce the gap between developed and developing countries.

Passages from Mr. MacEachen's statement to the House follow:

* * * *

UNCTAD IV was the first major UN conference following the Seventh Special Session, and in its disagreements as well as in its accords, it reflected these new dimensions: there were efforts to address these questions at a practical level; there were some important new commitments; there was agreement to create a program, timetable and framework for the central issues in which the many essential decisions can be taken.

In my statement to the conference on May 7, I touched on the four areas Canada considered would be the main issues to be dealt with: the problems of stabilization of commodity trade, the alleviation of the debt-servicing difficulties of many developing countries, liberalization of trade to benefit developing countries, and the transfer of technology to developing countries. Of these, the commodities issue proved to be the central focus of the conference. Indeed, the adoption — by consensus — of a resolution which established an integrated program for commodities was the major achievement of UNCTAD IV. The resolution defines the objectives of the integrated program, proposes a list of 18 commodities of particular interest to the developing countries for consideration, describes the international measures to be taken in the context of the program, and establishes procedures and a timetable for pursuing it.

Canada common fund contributor

On the important question of a common fund, the resolution provides for a

negotiating conference to be held next year and for a series of preparatory meetings. As a major importer and exporter of commodities we shall be actively involved in these international discussions and shall work with the other participants to resolve the problems of commodity trade which concern developing countries. These discussions and negotiations will provide the appropriate basis for examining the "parameters" of a common fund and for a decision regarding its establishment.... If we are satisfied in the course of these commodity meetings and negotiations that the common fund will be effective and useful, Canada will make a contribution to it.

The conference also took an important decision on the subject of the financial problems of developing countries by adopting, again by consensus, a resolution on the debt problems of developing countries. The resolution calls for appropriate international bodies to identify features relating to debt-servicing problems which could provide guidance in the future for dealing with them. In addition, a ministerial session of the UNCTAD Board will be held in 1977 to review this work and a group of experts will be established to assist in this review....

Apart from these two issues of particular importance, the conference also adopted resolutions on trade liberalization, the transfer of technology and a number of other subjects. One remarkable, and encouraging, aspect of the conference was the fact that 12 of the 13 resolutions approved were adopted by consensus. No previous

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