

Mr. Chairman, the tragedy continues. Less than four short months ago you called us to a meeting in Geneva to focus world attention on the plight of the refugees in South-East Asia. From the response you received from so many countries at that time, it is clear that your appeal struck a warm chord in the hearts of the peoples of this globe.

Canadians have been in the forefront of the resettlement countries offering new homes to the Indochinese refugees. At the Geneva meeting I was able to commit Canada to accepting 50,000 of these unfortunate people up to the end of next year. I am pleased to say that that programme of resettlement is now well under way.

Thousands of private Canadian citizens have banded together in groups to sponsor refugees in their communities, and are welcoming hundreds each week to their new homes. Working in concert with the federal and provincial governments, individual Canadians have made it possible for us as a country to respond more fully and more effectively to the plight of the Boat People and other refugees than we could have done if the government had had to act alone.

The hopes born of that meeting in Geneva for a solution to the problems of Indochina have since been dashed on the rocks of hard reality. It is now clear that the entire Khmer people of Cambodia are faced with annihilation through famine and warfare. With the loss of nearly all children under five years of age, and the jeopardy in which older children are now placed, it appears that at the very least a full generation of Kampuchians will be lost.

During the brutal reign of the Pol Pot regime some three million Kampuchians were the victims of deliberate annihilation. The survivors are now afflicted by war, disease and famine on a scale unequalled in modern time. A fertile and productive country - one that formerly exported large quantities of food to its neighbours - lies devastated. Its people have not the means, the strength nor the physical security to plant new crops.

Unless we help, Mr. Chairman, they will nearly all die. Our ability to prevent death on such a scale will be a measure of the humanity of the world community and of the effectiveness of the global institutions we have built.

The work already done by the International Committee of the Red Cross and by UNICEF to gain agreement of the governments concerned to deliver the needed food and medical assistance to the suffering civilian population is to be applauded. To date, however, they have met with all too little success in gaining the cooperation of the warring regimes.