



Statements and Speeches

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NEW AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES: THE NEED AND A RESPONSE

A speech by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister, to the United Nations Conference on Energy, Nairobi, Kenya, August 11, 1981

...It is good to be here at this conference. I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss with the distinguished delegates here assembled, one of the crucial economic challenges of our times. In its broadest scope, that challenge is to provide for the future energy needs of all the peoples of the world. Within the more specific goals of this conference, the challenge can be defined as the management of change in the energy economy of our planet, or the management of the transition toward the partial replacement of oil by new and renewable forms of energy....

I need not tell you that there are growing numbers of sceptics in all our countries. I need not remind you that global confidence in the United Nations may be eroding dangerously, principally because the fine words spoken from countless UN podiums have too seldom been translated into concrete expressions of the unity of purpose we so often profess. The harsh reality is that, at a time when we are all affected by many kinds of international crises, political as well as economic, at a time when there is an unprecedented need for the UN to be effective, we find that disappointed people around the world have diminishing faith in the ability of this organization to fulfil the vision of its founding members.

The matters we will be discussing at this conference are compelling enough in themselves to drive us in the direction of co-operative action. But we are also working under the additional imperative to prove that now, when the world's need for it is great, the UN can stimulate practical progress. Later on in my speech I will announce some concrete decisions the Canadian government has taken in support of the UN initiative which this conference represents, and in support of concerted international action in the energy field.

First, however, I should like to share with you some thoughts about the relevance of this conference to the wider North-South dialogue in which so many of our countries are engaged. Through that dialogue, we are reappraising an international economic structure which in the past has provided fertile ground for great growth among countries of both North and South, but which must be adjusted in some fundamental ways to the needs of today and tomorrow.

In this task, it is important to recognize the valid and sometimes spectacular achievements which have been realized within the present order. In the past 35 years, countries of the North have experienced periods of economic expansion unmatched in human history. In many countries of the South, national wealth and living standards have grown dramatically. New economic power centres have emerged in the Third World.

North-South
dialogue