

economic and perhaps other support. To enable the Canadian Government to examine more effectively those requests which may be forthcoming, I am instructing Canadian officials to consult with the three commissions of the Contadora group which will be set up in Venezuela to review social, economic and military verification requirements. I have also authorized our officials to accept an invitation to consult with the Action Committee for Socio Economic Development in Central America (CADESCA) which has been established in Mexico with a view to assessing and coordinating economic requirements of the region.

We have already agreed to increase our commitments to Central America. Canadian aid to the region has tripled for the five-year period 1982-87 to over \$100 million. Last month I announced a new component of this program which was a \$13 million line of credit for assistance in cattle and fertilizers to Nicaragua. This complements the most important program we have in Honduras - the second poorest country in the hemisphere - and the increasing levels of assistance given to Costa Rica.

It is important to recognize that the aid support given by Canada to the countries of Central America is not intended to penalize or to reward on the basis of political complexion. Such a policy would be totally inconsistent with our objective to help countries of the region to overcome those social and economic disabilities which are the cause of social, political and economic injustice.

However, where there are consistent and massive abuses of human rights, a line is drawn. In the case of El Salvador and Guatemala, our bilateral aid relations have been suspended as a result of the internal security situation and its effect on human rights and the difficulty of delivering aid programs in these countries. Our views on human rights violations were made clear in our voting last fall at the United Nations. However, purely humanitarian assistance is provided through non-governmental and international organizations to help meet the increasingly desperate needs of the victims in these countries.

For these same reasons, we have taken a lead in offering to accept refugees from the area. Last year we accepted 2,000; this year it will be 2,500. Canada has also established a special program for amnestied political prisoners from El Salvador. We have accepted 400 persons under this program, including close relatives.