

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, I am pleased to present the 2015-2016 *Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada's Official Development Assistance*.

In accordance with Canada's *Official Development Assistance Accountability Act*, our efforts continue to contribute to the reduction of poverty around the world while also taking the perspectives of the poor into account and aligning them with international human rights standards.

Since becoming the Minister of International Development in November 2015, I have concentrated on refocusing Canada's international assistance on the poorest and most vulnerable, as well as on fragile states. In line with this goal, our Government recently launched the International Assistance Review, a significant aspect of which has been broad consultations with Canadians as well as members of the international community. Before undertaking these public consultations, however, I made a point of rekindling the dialogue with all of our partners. As a result, I have had the pleasure to hold in-depth discussions on the future of Canada's international assistance with major donors, Canadian and international humanitarian and development organizations and, of course, with partner countries directly.

As our consultations have progressed, it has become apparent that women and girls must be at the heart of Canada's new international development policies. This decision was made not only because they are often the first to be affected by poverty, conflict and climate change, but also and especially because it is with the engagement and leadership of women and girls that we see the most potential for sustainable development and peace. It has been demonstrated that, when girls and women are given the means to reach their full potential, they create positive and lasting change within their families, their communities and their countries.

That is why I have committed to ensuring that Canada assumes a leadership role in strengthening women's socio-economic independence; advocating for their rights, particularly with regard to sexual and reproductive health services; fighting against child, early and forced marriage; and providing education. To do this, we will ensure that women are our partners, not just recipients of our support. From now on, they will be consulted, they will take part in decision making, and they will be actively involved in carrying out each of our projects.

Alongside the ongoing International Assistance Review, we are also developing an action strategy for La Francophonie. This is guided by the two most significant issues currently facing Africa: a population boom and climate change. If not managed properly, both will continue to put considerable pressure on the peace and security of the continent and the whole world.

In the early months of our Government, we announced two significant commitments. First, at the 21st Conference of the Parties (also known as COP21) that was held in Paris, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a commitment of \$2.65 billion to help developing countries address climate change.

Second, my colleagues the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence and I unveiled a joint action strategy to address the crisis raging in Syria and the Middle East, which features a new focus on delivering humanitarian and development assistance to the region. This innovative commitment of \$1.1 billion over three years was long-awaited by our humanitarian partners, who require a sustained commitment in order to be able to deliver real improvements for those suffering through this prolonged crisis.



On top of these commitments and the collaborative, whole-of-government approach that we have adopted, our Government was proud to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. These three major decisions significantly contributed to marking Canada's return to the international stage.

In addition to these important new commitments, Canada continues to achieve meaningful results through our official development assistance. In 2015–2016, Canada invested \$4.82 billion to help the poorest and most vulnerable; to improve the health of women and girls, now including reproductive and sexual health and rights; to stimulate sustainable economic growth; to increase food security; and to promote democracy. This report summarizes the initiatives of 17 Canadian government departments and agencies that collaborated with over 320 Canadian partners and numerous international organizations to achieve results of which all Canadians can be proud.

Lastly, progress was made at the end of fiscal year 2015–2016 in combatting epidemics and infectious diseases that especially affect the most vulnerable, as well as by creating an innovative development funding mechanism, which will be used to leverage the engagement of the private sector in achieving international development goals.

The challenges are formidable, but so are the skills and dedication of my team. It is therefore with hope and determination that we will continue our work so that the assistance provided by all Canadians has the greatest possible positive impact on the quality of life of the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls.

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of International Development and La Francophonie