



Putting Africans First: A Way Forward for Canada's Africa Policy

Introduction

In January and February of 2002, the National Forum on Africa took place within the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development¹, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's G8 leadership on Africa, and a desire to further develop Canada's long-term Africa-related foreign policy. The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, with our host partners, brought together nearly 400 Canadians, Africans and others from universities, non-governmental organizations, professional groups, parliament, business, labour, youth, and international organizations to provide public advice on Canada's Africa policy.² The Secretary of State for Africa, Latin America and the Francophonie, the Honourable Denis Paradis, M.P., and government officials from several departments also took part. The policy advice and recommendations included in this report (pages 9 to 17) are the cumulative result of 14 working groups at National Forum meetings in Toronto, Montreal, Saint John and Vancouver in January and February 2002. Video archives of all National Forum plenary sessions are available online at www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-africa.

Overview

National Forum participants proposed an integrated approach to policy that places

Africans' needs at the centre of all Canadian initiatives. This integrated approach should include peace and security; aid architecture; trade and economic issues; governance and institution building; education; health and social issues; the environment; and public participation in foreign policy, they said.

In his Vancouver address to the National Forum on Africa, Dr. Francis Deng, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons, highlighted the need to empower Africans to encourage "development from within:"

One has to be aware of the extent to which a particular people in a particular context in a particular long experience with managing their own affairs have developed norms and operational principles of dealing with conflict, for respecting human dignity and for seeing development not as something that is brought from elsewhere but as a process for self-enhancement from within.

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As well, placing Africans' needs at the forefront of public policy is central to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, a comprehensive approach as set out by African leaders at the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa.

¹ With its partners, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has carried out the National Forum on Canada's International Relations since 1996. The goal of the National Forum is to contribute public advice to the long-term development of Canada's foreign policy. Previous National Forum reports are archived on the CCFPD website (www.cfp-pec.gc.ca).

² The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was endorsed by 53 member states of the Organization of African Unity. In the New Partnership, African leaders propose to improve governance, address armed conflict, bridge the digital divide, seek investment and access to new markets, and improve health and education. The full document is available at online at www.africainitiative.org/Documents/AA0010101.pdf.