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MONIQUE LANDRY **REAFFIRMS CANADA'S COMMITMENT TO AFRICA**

In a speech to the Montreal Council for International Relations (CORIM) today, the Honourable Monique Landry, Minister for External Relations and International Development, reaffirmed Canada's commitment to Africa. She described Canada's policy toward Africa in broad terms and unveiled the main points of a new strategy of co-operation called "Africa 21." Mrs. Landry's intervention ended the activities of the second International Development Week.

"Canada's commitment is an essential and lasting one and places high priority on respect for human rights and good government management," said Mrs. Landry. She drew attention to the intensive consultations that have accompanied the reviewing of the policy toward Africa.

Mrs. Landry pointed out that Africa 21, which will be implemented by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is designed to place, in a long-term perspective, Canada-Africa co-operation on the eve of the 21st century. Sustainable and equitable development will be a key element of the policy which will reflect the desire of Canadians to contribute toward democratic development and economic and social progress in Africa. As part of Canada's overall policy toward Africa, the new strategy will emphasize, among other things, regional economic integration on the African continent.

"Africa 21 will endeavour to fulfil the expectations of African partners who are seeking support as they progress toward unity, democracy and entrepreneurship," said Mrs. Landry. Africa 21 will aim at harmonizing the programs

of CIDA and those of other Canadian and African partners. Mrs. Landry reiterated Canada's desire to consult regularly with these same partners in implementing Africa 21 and adapting it to the constantly changing conditions in Africa.

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BACKGROUND

CANADA'S BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Canada's official presence in Africa dates back more than 30 years and spans the entire continent, with Canadian officials posted in 21 African countries. Canada's presence recently expanded with the opening of an embassy in Namibia in 1990, our participation in United Nations peacekeeping exercises in Western Sahara and Angola, and our active participation in humanitarian assistance programs in the Horn of Africa. More than 20 African countries have also sought Canada's constitutional and electoral expertise in the past two years.

Since the late 1950s, the most visible aspect of our relations with African countries has been our official development assistance. Bilaterally, this assistance totals nearly \$7 billion, apart from our significant contributions to other programs and to international organizations. Canada's commitment to Africa remains a priority, and indicative planning figures for bilateral development assistance over the next five years could total several billion dollars. This would be complemented by other related programs and our contributions to multilateral organizations, of which Africa will continue to receive a considerable share.

The unselfish co-operation of Canadians with Africa is rooted in the missionary activities of Canadian religious institutions at the turn of the century. The presence of Canadian non-governmental organizations in Africa has also been a significant phenomenon and continues to play an important complementary role in humanitarian and development assistance. As well, a growing number of African students come to Canada to complete their education.

Economically, our highly diversified trade in goods, equipment and services has totalled more than \$40 billion over the same three decades. The late 1970s and early 1980s were the most active period. Our level of trade has since remained steady, totalling \$2.2 billion in 1990 and \$1.5 billion for the first nine months of 1991.

An important aspect of our relations with African countries is undoubtedly the political dialogue that we maintain bilaterally as well as multilaterally in international organizations. Specific events and national crises have led Canada to multiply its diplomatic contacts with various countries. Canada has also actively supported the search for solutions to conflicts in Africa. This dialogue extends far beyond political institutions to social, economic, cultural and technical fields. Canada's

leadership in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie often promotes African development and brings us increasingly closer to Africa through political dialogue.

Canada has taken a very clear stand on the issues of democratization, respect for human rights, and guarantees of civil liberties and individual freedoms. The respect for these basic, universal values is essential to allow all segments of society to participate in effective development. In this context, Canada is providing assistance and expertise to support African countries that have initiated political and economic reforms. Canadian leadership, especially in the Commonwealth and other organizations, has been very important in the campaign to dismantle apartheid in South Africa.

In short, Canada's relations with Africa over the past decade have obviously progressed beyond missionary work and development support. Although these remain important aspects, our relations are increasingly assuming the nature of political, social, economic and cultural dialogue and partnership.

BACKGROUNDER

THE EVOLUTION OF CANADIAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The economic development of North and Sub-Saharan Africa continues to offer numerous opportunities for Canadian exports of goods and services. Canadian firms have made many advances in the African market over the past 20 years, and our active participation in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie and our debt-forgiveness initiatives have enhanced our profile there. In response, African political and private-sector leaders have shown a genuine desire to increase trade and business relations with Canada and to seek Canadian investments in Africa.

Canada has been active in African markets for some time. Our commercial exchanges in goods, equipment and services over the last three decades have been highly diversified, and total over \$40 billion. The most active periods were in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Our commercial exchanges have since held at around \$2 billion annually.

In North Africa, most countries are engaged in economic reforms promoting foreign investment, the enhancement of the private sector, trade and economic liberalization and, in the long run, the convertibility of their currencies. Their economic and infrastructural development needs, which complement our industrial and export strength, our ability to provide them with much-coveted North American technology in French, and the availability of development assistance and export financing, have combined to further Canada's commercial presence in the region.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, political uncertainty and severe debt and balance-of-payment problems continue to affect a number of countries. The majority, however, are implementing economic structural adjustment reform programs and their economic performances have improved. In the past few years, various governments have increased the priority to developing the private sector, where Canada shall continue to develop and maintain business relationships.

The reforms occurring in Africa offer new opportunities and challenges to Canadian exporters. Most countries are striving to diversify and restructure their economic infrastructure and reinforce their small- to medium-sized industries; there is a renewed emphasis on education and training; and interesting new opportunities in consulting, training, and management and financial services are opening as a result of privatization programs.

As part of a pro-active trade development program, Canada will focus on sector-specific trade initiatives emphasizing multilateral and commercial financing and specialized missions to priority countries. Increasing the awareness of Canadian capabilities in Africa and of African market opportunities in Canada, are goals that will be actively pursued through a communications program aimed at both the Canadian and African business communities.

The African Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank will continue to be major sources of financing, particularly for projects that are part of national economic reform and industrial restructuring programs. We will place special emphasis on helping Canadian businesses take advantage of the opportunities that these programs offer. This also applies to project funding under the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) programs, especially those of the Canadian Partnership Branch. The limited scope of Export Development Corporation (EDC) activities in Africa, resulting from criteria used for countries facing difficulties with debt repayment, and the restricted access to concessional financing, will mean that other financial sources must also be tapped.

Canada's priorities in Africa will focus on North Africa, Nigeria, Gabon, Angola, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Zambia, Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire. Sectorally we will concentrate on the oil and gas sectors, agri-food, transportation, telecommunications, mining, production and transportation of electricity, and management and consulting services. Industrial infrastructure, energy, computer equipment and services, education and training, and fisheries development will also reflect our priorities in certain countries.

The economic development of Africa over the next few years should offer substantial opportunities for Canadian exporters of goods and services, who will benefit from the advances achieved in the last few decades and the exploration of new avenues, such as importing from Africa, where economically feasible.

BACKGROUND

AFRICA'S POLITICAL SITUATION

The African continent continues to attract international attention for humanitarian reasons and because of the major armed conflicts and numerous civil disturbances that have rocked the majority of authoritarian regimes over the past two years. However, for the first time in almost a decade, international agencies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are seeing positive, though still precarious, development in three areas: progress in implementing reform and economic growth; the first steps toward ending civil war; and the growing interest of African countries in political pluralism.

In the past two years, Africa has mainly been characterized by growing political change and the rise of democratic regimes. This development is marked by the introduction or, in many cases, renewal of a multi-party system in nearly 25 African countries and neighbouring islands. These political changes are closely followed by still-hesitant reform of civil and government institutions, such as the judiciary and the press. A very large number of opposition newspapers have appeared in countries moving toward democratic reform. Africa's electronic media nevertheless remain largely under direct government control.

Although several countries are still criticized by international agencies for their violations of human rights and their restrictions on civil liberties and political freedom, remarkable progress has been made in freeing political prisoners, introducing judicial structures, and democratizing the political process. More than 35 countries have amended or introduced constitutions or basic laws affording every opportunity to establish democratic governments guaranteeing respect for civil liberties and political and individual freedoms. Africans are becoming aware of the importance of protecting human rights. Initial progress has also been made in protecting children and in recognizing the role of women in development.

In spite of the modest progress that has been made and the end of ideological rivalry between the superpowers in Africa, political reform in several countries continues to be heralded and accompanied by violence and civil disturbances. Recent events in a dozen countries that have initiated democratic reforms are a reminder that military intervention remains a real danger. Furthermore, the impact of civil war and armed insurrection still dictates the rules of the game in more than a dozen countries. Finally, opposition to democratization by a number of authoritarian regimes is still a concern.

Economically, some 35 countries have initiated programs to reorganize their economic infrastructures, often with the support of international organizations. The resulting austerity is seriously affecting all segments of African society.

In terms of social and humanitarian assistance, Africa remains a major beneficiary of efforts to help the world's poorest countries. The activities by donor countries have nevertheless made it possible to bring many serious problems under control on a short-term basis. In the health area, AIDS is still taking a considerable toll, although it is spreading at a slower rate, and other diseases such as cholera remain endemic. Food production is very uneven, and the continent as a whole still experiences a food deficit. Little has yet been done to control environmental destruction. Finally, Africa's population (642 million) has more than doubled since the independence movement of the 1960s and will double again by the year 2010. Population growth continues to put inevitable pressure on the already precarious and inadequate economies and social systems of the various states. There has been some progress toward awareness of these problems, however, and increasing resources are being mobilized to deal with them.

Under these conditions, 1992 promises to be a year of major political, social and economic challenges for Africa. An initial solution to armed conflicts may be achieved. In terms of humanitarian needs, major efforts to combat natural and social ills have scarcely begun. Once the precarious gains in political reform have been consolidated, the problem of militarism in Africa will increasingly be the focus of international pressure. Regional integration plans will also become indispensable to maximize the impact of economic reform and to minimize the fragility of national economies. Finally, it is not yet certain whether the new political authorities will be more successful than their predecessors in reducing corruption and civil unrest. The increased progress made in 1990-91, nevertheless, suggests that the rising generation of educated young people will begin to demonstrate, in 1992, that the concept of better government is slowly re-establishing itself in Africa.

BACKGROUND

CANADA AND AFRICA: TRUE PARTNERS

Africa is at a turning point. In recent years, the continent has embarked on a difficult course of major political, social and economic change. The economic regression, or at best stagnation, of the 1980s has forced many governments to adopt ambitious structural adjustment programs that are seriously affecting the relationship between citizens and the state.

More than half of the African nations have already set out on the path of reform. Many others are preparing to do so. Abandonment of authoritarian regimes in favour of democratic institutions, openness to political pluralism, and the encouragement of private initiative in economic life are all trends underlying the movement toward change that is sweeping through Africa. Such change will be accompanied by jolts that will attract worldwide attention.

This upheaval in Africa is occurring at a time of transformation on the international scene. The end of East-West rivalry, the emergence of a united Europe, the increased appeal of a pluralistic society and a market economy as models, and the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa are all factors that are leading Africa to question its present and future. More than ever, Canada plans to support the efforts of African countries during this difficult phase of their development toward political institutions and an economic system that better reflects the aspirations of Africa's peoples.

Canada has always shown solidarity with Africa. From the independence movement of the 1960s to the current hard times, Canada has continually proved its partnership and its concern for beneficial and sustainable development. Canada's linguistic duality and its membership in the Commonwealth and La Francophonie have facilitated the emergence of a better understanding of African realities in the hearts and minds of many Canadians and their leaders. For 30 years, Canada has supported the struggle against racism and apartheid in the southern part of the continent. Canada will continue to support and encourage the search for solutions to the conflicts that persist in Africa.

Canada has been a fervent supporter of the North-South dialogue. Links forged within the Commonwealth and La Francophonie have justifiably led many African countries to rely on Canada as their advocate with the industrialized world and international financial institutions. Canada has not betrayed this trust. Our efforts in the search for a solution to the external debt problem well illustrate the Canadian attitude.