



Statements and Speeches

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CANADIAN POLICY IN AFRICA

Address by the Honourable Pierre De Bané, Minister of State for External Relations, to the Canadian Institute for African Affairs, Montreal, February 23, 1982

...During the course of my various duties, I have had the pleasure of visiting many African countries — countries of the Maghreb, from where I recently returned, of West Africa, of the Sahel and of Central Africa. In my travels, I came to appreciate the broad diversity of the continent and its peoples and, everywhere I went, I became aware of warm feelings of friendship towards Canada. Why does this warmth, this friendliness exist? That will be the theme on today's subject of Canadian policy in Africa.

Our relations with Africa constitute an important element of our foreign policy. This is hardly surprising, since Canada has diplomatic relations with more than 140 countries, a third of them African. However, statistics do not explain the tremendous dynamism of our relations with Africa. The fact of the matter is that for reasons which I will try to explain, Canadian programs relating to Africa are expanding rapidly, at rates that have still not reached a peak.

As evidence of this expansion and the vitality of our relations, I should mention in passing that Canada has a network of 20 diplomatic missions in Africa, accredited in all independent states of the continent. Since relations are two-way, Canada has in turn approved 28 African embassies and high commissions in Ottawa, as well as 28 consular offices throughout the country.

To comprehend fully this phenomenon and to appreciate the rapid growth of Canado-African relations, we should step back in time and review the question from the beginning. The Canadian presence in Africa dates from the start of the century. From that time, many Canadian missionaries chose that continent for their humanitarian work. Many thousands of missionaries thus served in Africa over the years, especially in the fields of health and education. They founded schools and colleges which contributed to the education of the African ruling class. They were the precursors of our relations, today so diversified, and the first Canadian witnesses of the African reality. Their actions and words reinforced the strong affinities which have always existed between Africa and Canada.

These affinities were partly strengthened by linguistic factors. Thus, French-speaking, Catholic Canadian missionaries were particularly interested in West and Central Africa, and English-speaking, Protestant Canadian missionaries established themselves primarily in Commonwealth Africa. These were natural patterns and they in no way

hindered the establishment of, for example, French-speaking missionaries in Lesotho, nor the work of English-speaking missionaries in Mauritania; neither did they prevent Canadians from becoming active in areas which required languages other than French or English. Canadians thus played a major role in setting up an educational system in Ethiopia. Progress has continued: two Canadian women, medical missionaries, recently received the Order of Canada in recognition of their heroic work in Angola when that country was in a state of war.

Apart from the contribution by missionaries, the Canadian business community was interested in Africa. The Alcan company, for example, began operations in Guinea when that country was still a French colony, and opened a business office in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) in 1947.

As African countries became independent states, Canada accorded them diplomatic recognition beginning with Ghana in 1957. Independence for other Commonwealth countries followed, as it did for former French and Belgian colonies. With the emergence of a large number of new African states whose official language was French, the Francophone element began to play an increasingly prominent role in foreign policy, in parallel with the Commonwealth element. It was in fact during this period that there was a resurgence of the "French fact" in Canada, and a wish to reveal this vitality in new areas all over the world led to an intense interest in Africa. Canada thus began to establish a network of embassies and high commissions in Africa, and to welcome African diplomatic missions; these new political ties served to develop and stimulate exchanges, certain of which, based on natural affinities, had appeared several decades earlier.

The time thus came to formulate a Canadian policy on Africa. Since the new African countries had urgent needs in the matter of economic and social development — needs brought into focus through the testimony of missionaries — it was natural that Canada's actions should be concentrated chiefly in that field, but not to the exclusion of all others.

Thus, Canada helped the new African regimes to take their place in the world order, providing them with easier access to the various international agencies. It also participated in the first United Nations peace mission to what was formerly the Congo. Already a member of the Commonwealth, Canada also supported the leading institutions of the French-speaking world, many of which it helped to establish. Since the African countries account for a major portion of the membership of the various agencies linked to the Commonwealth and the French-speaking world, Canada has discovered an effective means of consolidating its ties with Africa in that framework, thereby reinforcing its bilateral relations with each of the African countries.

Objectives policy Today, Canado-African relations have reached an advanced stage of maturity, and we have begun to acquire sound experience in African matters. Canada is actively pur-

suings the main objectives of its foreign policy in Africa.

First, we want to contribute effectively, with due regard to social justice, to the development of the African countries, particularly the most disadvantaged. The scale of our efforts in this area attest to the seriousness of our intent and the strength of our good will.

Secondly, we want to express our national identity on the world scene, especially in Africa, by developing and reinforcing our links with French-speaking countries, as well as with member countries of the Commonwealth.

Thirdly, we wish to establish lasting economic ties with the African countries, to our mutual advantage. We have complete confidence in the success of Africa's development, since that continent has enormous potential and we know that aid as a solution must gradually give place to the establishment of profitable trade relations, this being one aim of the North-South dialogue.

Fourthly, we want to do our part in maintaining peace and security in Africa, as we did in what was formerly the Congo, in Zimbabwe, in Uganda, and now in Namibia. Obviously, we do not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries: we must above all respect the African nations' wish to provide their own solutions to the major conflicts still affecting some areas of the continent.

Fifthly, we want to contribute to improving the quality of life, especially where the environment is concerned. You may recall that the first Secretary-General of the United Nations Environment Program, which has its headquarters in Nairobi, was a Canadian, Maurice Strong.

How do these diverse objectives become reality? This question brings me to the subject of our operations, programs and activities in Africa, the successes we have achieved and the problems we face.

Almost half of Canadian bilateral aid grants are directed to Africa. At present, this represents a sum of more than \$300 million a year, and this amount will increase rapidly as we approach our objective of allocating 0.7 per cent of our gross national product to assisting Third World countries. To this figure must be added the amounts, difficult to compute, channelled to Africa through international agencies which we support financially, such as the United Nations Development Program, the World Food Program, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, French-language institutions, Commonwealth institutions, and a multiplicity of Canadian and international non-governmental organizations.

Development aid is not merely a matter of transferring funds and technology. Well-

defined projects must be implemented, in a context which is often difficult, beset by overwhelming logistical problems. When visiting Africa, I have always been impressed by the courage and generosity of hundreds of Canadians who have chosen to work in this field. This human dimension of development seems splendid to me, for it represents a privileged area of cultural exchanges by means of which we come to know and appreciate one another, while at the same time working together to build tomorrow's Africa.

Our aid program is thus not simply a matter of dollars and cents, but a tangible reality. It means a polytechnic school in Senegal, a railroad in Malawi, a dam in Tunisia, an aqueduct system in Ethiopia, grain crops in Tanzania, an access road in Niger. Hundreds of economic and social infrastructures have been established within the framework of Canado-African co-operation. Over the years, we have learnt to match the most pressing needs of African countries with our own abilities, and we have decided that henceforth, our efforts should be concentrated in the sectors of rural development, energy and human resources. Obviously, this does not exclude action in other areas such as transport, telecommunications and health, when such projects have vital importance and we are in a position to ensure their successful completion.

The human dimension of development, which I mentioned just now, has led us to look closely at the conditions under which projects are carried out. We have seen that a project's chances of success depend on several factors, including good long-term planning, competent management, thorough knowledge of the environment, and consistency of effort. These facts have prompted us to concentrate aid in a limited number of countries, so that efficiency and cost effectiveness are more reliably assured. Most countries in which we concentrate our development aid are in the low-income bracket.

This need to concentrate aid in a limited number of countries has given rise to a serious problem. We are somewhat torn between our wish to manage our aid program efficiently and our wish to assist the people of all disadvantaged countries. In other words, we would like to assist everyone everywhere, but we know that we can produce worthwhile results only by working conscientiously in a limited number of locations at any one time. We are dealing with this problem by introducing more flexible aid instruments, through non-governmental and international organizations and agencies competent to carry out eminently useful projects which we finance generously, without increasing our own staff. We have also increased the level of funds available to our missions for directly financing basic development projects. However, this represents a continuing problem, one to which we are trying to find a satisfactory solution.

Economic relations

Our economic relations with Africa have expanded rapidly. For trade, the statistics are as follows: in 1980, total exchanges exceeded \$1.7 billion, or double the figure

for five years earlier. This is due not to imports, which have deviated only slightly from \$0.5 billion for several years, but to rapid growth in exports. In 1960, only a handful of Canadian companies had interests in Africa; now, the number stands at about a hundred. I have often met Canadian businessmen in Africa, and I have been struck by their dynamism and by their determination to enter the African market. It is thanks to such men and their sustained efforts that the various African countries have learned to appreciate the quality of our products and services.

Exports

How should our trade with Africa be characterized? Canada's export figures for Africa are as follows: 1980: Arabic Africa, \$660 million, almost \$400 million of which went to Algeria, by far our leading partner; black Africa, \$350 million; southern Africa, \$200 million. Figures for exports to French-speaking Africa illustrate the growth rate: in 1960, under \$10 million; in 1970, almost \$40 million; in 1980, \$627 million. To these figures must be added the value of services extended, not really computable but certainly representing several hundred million dollars, and the global value of Canadian investments in Africa, also reaching a figure of several hundred million dollars.

These figures, unavoidably abstract in nature, represent a very vivid reality. Canada exports to Africa agricultural products, transportation, electrical and electronic equipment, prefabricated houses, machinery, chemical products, asbestos, paper products; the emphasis is clearly on products and equipment which will contribute to Africa's development. Canada's chief imports from Africa are unrefined petroleum, ores, sugar, coffee, cocoa. It is self-evident that as African countries become more prosperous and their economy more diversified, trade in both directions will increase in volume and variety.

This growth in exports to Africa is the more remarkable since Africa is not an easy market for us. I might mention some of the problems we face. African companies often have close links with those of Europe, and the latter often control the markets. Calls for tenders are often formulated according to European rather than North American standards and criteria; the difference is important when tenders are being prepared and is disadvantageous to our companies. The question of financing transactions is also a major problem; the heavy debts and economic difficulties of many African countries are barriers to obtaining commercial credit and we do not enjoy the same flexibility as European countries when backing a commercial loan with aid votes. European companies are omnipresent in Africa, whereas we have hardly tapped that market or identified those sectors in which we are best qualified to compete. We are gaining ground rapidly, but are not being awarded contracts; we must win them through demonstrated competence and persistence.

Special measures have been taken to facilitate Canado-African commercial exchanges. Each week, a Canadian trade mission visits some part of Africa. We finance familiarization tours to Africa by Canadian businessmen. Imports from most African coun-

tries benefit from the general system of preferential tariffs. We facilitate visits to Canada by representatives of African exporters who want to market their products in Canada. Certain aid projects, especially in the most prosperous countries, generate lasting commercial benefits and sometimes make it possible for Canadian companies to open offices in Africa. The Export Development Corporation is taking an increasingly greater interest in the African market, along with Canadian businessmen; lastly, the Canadian International Development Agency has set up a program for industrial co-operation which facilitates the creation of joint Canado-African companies. Under this plan, Canadian companies join with African businessmen to establish in Africa enterprises such as bakeries, sawmills, poultry-rearing centres, and furniture factories. I feel this is very promising, since the economic vitality of a country rests largely on the development of small- and medium-sized businesses.

Prime matters

The aid program and trade relations, which both contribute to economic development, are at the centre of our links with Africa. The more purely political side is equally important. In this area, we share the major concerns of the African governments. If I may, I would like to enlarge upon this topic.

Canada is deeply involved in the North-South dialogue. This matter, of prime importance for Africa, has given rise to many consultations with our African friends, and several visits by the Prime Minister to various African countries. I have discussed these questions with a number of African heads of state and ministers, and I have always observed how keenly our positions and actions in the matter were appreciated.

Another question of vital importance to Africa is the problem of decolonization. I have already mentioned the active role which Canada assumed whenever independence was achieved. We have also shown an interest in this question through the part we played in the events leading to independence for Zimbabwe. For five years, in concert with other western countries, and in constant contact with the countries of southern Africa, we have been working determinedly to set in motion a process which will enable Namibia to obtain its independence, by peaceful means, on the basis of free elections supervised by the United Nations Organization.

With reference to *apartheid*, Canada has continually and vigorously fought this racist system which is an affront to human dignity, and which Prime Minister Trudeau has called an insult to humanity. Canada anticipated the United Nations when, in 1963, it initiated an embargo on arms sales to South Africa. We also took steps to discourage participation in sporting events with that country, beginning in 1978, and to discourage expansion of trade relations. Finally, we have offered, through the services of various agencies, constant support for the victims of *apartheid*.

Canada, which has never been a colonial power, pursues a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries. This policy has always met with the approval of the countries in question. However, although we maintain absolute

neutrality in the face of conflicts such as those affecting the western Sahara, the Republic of Chad and the Horn of Africa, this does not necessarily mean that we are insensitive to the problems; indeed, Canada provides appreciable humanitarian relief for victims of such conflicts. Canada also played a key role in re-establishing human rights in Equatorial Guinea, after the fall of the Macias dictatorship, and participated in supervision of elections in Uganda when Amin Dada fell from power.

At present, we are continuing an ever more profound and sustained political dialogue with Africa. Top-level visits are increasing in number, as are consultations when international crises occur. This political dialogue is pursued on a bilateral basis and also on the occasion of meetings of Commonwealth agencies and Francophone institutions.

This, then, is a broad outline of Canada's African policy. As you have doubtless inferred, this is a coherent, dynamic and soundly based policy. There are still elements which need to be expanded upon and integrated into our general policy, for example, our relations with certain countries which belong neither to the French-speaking world nor to the Commonwealth; desired expansion of our aid programs in the face of administrative constraints dictated by a concern for effectiveness; the expansion, likewise desired, of our network of diplomatic missions, in the face of our policy of austerity. However, I am pleased to observe that no political problems exist between Canada and any African country. Our relations are doubtless more intense with some than with others, but are in all cases excellent.

The Canadian government attaches great importance to the development of its relations with Africa. We shall continue to support the efforts of the African countries to step up their rate of development. We shall continue to promote our political exchanges, exchanges of personnel, cultural and commercial exchanges. We shall continue to strengthen our ties at the bilateral level and within the multilateral agencies of which we are members.

The history of Canado-African relations shows us that we share many common interests with Africa. We have learned from these relations that they rest on a solid foundation, one suited to agreement and co-operation at all levels. We shall thus continue to build on this foundation, in order to pursue rapprochement and contribute to the creation of a better, more just and more prosperous world.

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