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**STATEMENT**

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**NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY**

**THE HONOURABLE CHRISTINE STEWART,**

**SECRETARY OF STATE (LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA),**

**TO THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE**

**ON CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW**

**OTTAWA, Ontario  
March 15, 1994**

My remarks today are made in the context of our government's commitment to a foreign policy review.

The foreign policy review commences with this opportunity in the House of Commons for elected members of Parliament to speak to issues that, although they may not seem as urgent to their constituents' well-being, are in fact just as relevant to the well-being of Canadians as health, welfare and the social safety net. Many factors outside of Canada threaten the security of our daily lives and that of our children and grandchildren, just as surely as unemployment, the deterioration of health and education programs, and difficulties resulting from our debt and deficits at home.

If world population growth rates continue and poverty worldwide is allowed to continue to ravage our global environment; if consumption levels continue without consideration of whether that consumption is sustainable; if women worldwide are not recognized as the critical determiners of health and education standards and economic well-being, nor supported adequately in these roles; then our very survival is threatened, not just our economic or social well-being.

Members of Parliament are elected to represent more than the immediate interests of their constituents, important as these interests are. Members of Parliament are obliged to balance the interests of their constituents with the broad and often conflicting interests of the regions of Canada and of our country as a whole. But federally elected members of Parliament must broaden the balance of all of these interests to include a global perspective -- the best interests of humanity as a whole, our global family. Our vision cannot be blinkered by narrow interests; we must not be blind to critical issues in a rapidly changing world. As I am sure all members have noticed since the commencement of the 35th Parliament, determining the future directions of our nation is a complex and often difficult balancing act.

Canada has a long-standing reputation for leadership in addressing international problems, and we intend to further strengthen this reputation over the years, but no government has all the answers. In the post-Cold War era we are continuously presented with rapidly changing situations, new challenges and many opportunities. That is the reason that this government is launching today a broad consultative process with the Canadian people.

Ultimately the Government must make policy decisions, but we recognize that Canadians, for reasons of culture, language, education, travel and business experience, have much more to contribute to policy formulation than ever before. These rich qualities of culture, language, education and international experience are not exceeded in any other country.

The Liberal government does not come to its foreign policy review with a blank slate. Even while in Opposition, we consulted with the Canadian people on a wide variety of issues such as UN [United Nations] reform, aid, human rights and sustainable development. Our principles have been clearly articulated, and it is upon the basis of these that we wish to review our foreign policy. It is my own fervent wish that at the end of the process we will be able to articulate a more coherent foreign policy throughout which the various elements of aid, trade, defence, environment, health, agriculture, immigration and politics will complement each other.

In the past, elements of Canadian foreign policy have often operated without consideration of their effects upon other policy areas. This resulted in policies that often worked at cross-purposes and that ran the risk of cancelling out each others' benefits. Our fragile planet cannot withstand the continuation of this short-sighted approach. Scarce resources, public and private, must be harmonized to maximize our limited capabilities. We need a full foreign policy review to help us better understand how to achieve coherent results.

My specific purpose in addressing this debate today is to highlight the relevant issues from the perspective of my areas of responsibility: Latin America, which includes the Caribbean, and Africa.

I would like to begin with some reflections first on Africa. As a continent that is rich in culture, human resources and geographic wonders, it is, I believe, worth our attention and consideration.

Africa currently has a population of 650 million people -- a figure that could double by the year 2010. Canadians need to determine what kind of impact 27.5 million Canadians can have that will improve the conditions of life faced by 650 million Africans. What can we do when the people of Africa are forced to eradicate their own natural resources for the purpose of survival? It is in those situations that environmental concerns become as much a security issue for Canada as terrorism.

The nature of Canadian aid to Africa has changed in recent years. More and more of our dollars are spent in providing relief, not development assistance, relief augmented by peacekeeping and defence dollars, dispensed in response to social, economic and political upheaval. Ultimately, Canada is forced to make huge contributions to alleviating refugee programs, at home and abroad. We must recognize the immense costs of social, political and economic crises and their linkage to our own well-being at home here in Canada.

The cost to Canada of emergency assistance, peacekeeping and refugee care and processing in war zones far outweighs the cost of building secure and stable societies through long-term development. In recent years it has become evident that we cannot afford not to promote international peace and security.

I would also like to point out why I believe attempts to achieve coherency in foreign policy are important and why Africa most easily illustrates that reality. Aid or development assistance alone, in whatever volume, is insufficient. If current relief dollars, emergency food aid dollars for example, were all converted to "development" dollars to address basic human needs for health, education and income generation, the problems of Africa would still not disappear. Dollars spent by Canada for development should therefore complement policies and programs of recipient country governments with the same end in mind -- sustainable development.

Good governance, human rights, adherence to democratic principles, economic transparency, and acceptable accountability standards are requisite. We cannot afford to squander too many development assistance dollars in countries that do not respect the principles and goals of our initiatives. For that purpose, Canada has already started to relate our assistance to such principles as respect for human rights and competent economic management. This will surely be examined as a part of the foreign policy review.

This is obviously an approach of utmost importance, yet even a policy of providing development dollars to countries practising good governance policies will not alone achieve sustainable development in those countries. Economic opportunity must also be possible. For many African countries, debt burdens threaten to prevent the emergence of a viable economy. There is an additional need in developing countries for policies to encourage foreign investment, and for international policies that permit free and fair trade to occur with poorer nations. Political will on all sides to bring about necessary reform is paramount. I am sure our foreign policy review process will assist the Canadian government in developing proactive, effective methods to achieve this goal.

Africa is going through a period of extensive change. The populations of many African nations are signalling their determination to rid themselves of the recurring problems of corruption and abuse of power that have been associated with their governments. The people of Africa have illustrated their desire to live under governments that are capable of responding to the basic needs of their societies: health, education, peace, a sustainable environment and economic stability.

The task ahead for Africa is not an easy one. The changes required will not occur without the tremendous work and dedication of African citizens. Canada recognizes that the movement toward democratization will not be without difficulties. Inevitably, political change does not occur without problems or unexpected detours. Nonetheless, it is important for the democratization process to take root, respecting African customs, traditions and values, in order for the process to become well-anchored and for it to provide hope for future African generations.

Supporting the process of democratization and good governance only to election day is not sufficient in newly democratizing nations. Elections are but a first step of many, albeit a crucial one. Canada must therefore be committed to continued support for the development of good governance.

From the Canadian perspective, the changes that are taking place in Africa are welcome ones. In recognizing the need for change, and the potential for growth that exists in these countries upon achieving political and social stability, Canada can grasp an important opportunity by continuing to support this transition.

We also should not underestimate the economic ties Canada has established with Africa. Our African trade involves every Canadian region and has allowed many companies to make more effective use of their knowledge and technology. This is of significant benefit to Canadians, who gain not only market access but also jobs and greater economic security for themselves. By applying its knowledge and supplying its products where the demand emerges, Canada maintains and increases its competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, it is worth recalling that the United Nations, the Commonwealth and la Francophonie are major multilateral organizations through which Canadians and Africans have been closely associated. Many of our honourable members may not be aware that African countries comprise 30 percent of UN membership, 27 percent of the Commonwealth and 52 percent of the countries in la Francophonie.

The linguistic, cultural and historical ties between our nations have existed far longer than our relationships through aid programs. Indeed, Canada's bilingual and multicultural nature has been an important factor in building those long-term relationships. That is the foundation upon which we can take the opportunity to build a long and fruitful partnership well into the future, if we have the political will to do so. In my opinion, we cannot afford not to. Our foreign policy review will help us to focus on how to manage our programs most effectively.

Within our development assistant programs, Canada has traditionally attached the highest priority to activities that attempt to reduce global poverty. It has been recognized that crime, violence and large-scale conflict often result in situations where poverty is most prevalent. Our government has stated that our goal is to provide 25 percent of our ODA [Official Development Assistance] to meet basic human needs and human resource development; to provide basic health and education; to work more closely to assist women who are the poorest principal providers of health, nutrition and education; and to provide sustainable development so that future generations may also know peace and security.

This government was elected on a promise of fiscal responsibility. While we are not in a position at this time to increase funding to our development assistance program, our goal remains the same -- to achieve a 0.7 percent ODA to GNP [gross national product] ratio. Despite this need for fiscal restraint, I do not believe that limited financial resources necessitate a reduction in effectiveness. Through creative, proactive and well-managed programs, our impact can even increase. Initiatives in human rights, for example, often administered on a small scale, can have a widespread impact. Our challenge is to administer all of our programs more effectively.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the impact of necessary change can be felt unequally by different groups in society. Canada is trying to respond to this reality by working with international financial institutions and through local governments to protect existing adjustment programs but mitigate negative impacts by launching new social programs to benefit those most directly affected by adjustment. We hope the foreign policy review will address this issue.

Canada has participated in adjustment efforts by trying to alleviate the debt burden. In 1985 we forgave all outstanding loans to the least-developed nations. From that point on, our official development assistance programs have been based upon grants, not the lending of money. Still, Africa's continuing debt burden severely handicaps its efforts at sustainable development. As a development partner, we need to consider how best to alleviate this burden. Success will assist in the creation of healthier African economies.

Mr. Speaker, now to Latin America. Canada is a country in and of the Americas. With the effects of globalization, Latin America and the Caribbean have become increasingly central to Canada's foreign policy. This region has already started upon fundamental economic, political and social change and modernization. Canada has a unique opportunity to share in this evolution and to help to shape it through positive collaboration. We are viewed as a

responsible and increasingly committed hemispheric partner, and I believe that we stand to benefit from this partnership.

In recognizing the potential of this partnership, we must also recognize that Canada has a great deal to learn in order to avoid being marginalized in the development of our relationship in this hemisphere. The region's history, language and culture are very different from our own, and our understanding of its situation will influence the extent and success of our relationship.

Canada's foreign policy toward the region faces many challenges. Our approach to Latin America and the Caribbean must be consistent with our overall foreign policy objectives, which include poverty alleviation, the promotion of good governance, human rights, social stability, gender and racial equality, a sustainable environment, and international peace and stability. While the population is well-educated in comparison with that of other developing regions, profound social problems exist in this region that must be addressed at the source. Central among these is the unequal distribution of wealth and land. Resolution of these issues is essential if the population's future well-being is to be guaranteed.

In recent years, there have been positive political trends in Latin America. In the early 1980s, many countries were ruled by the military. Now almost all governments in the region have been democratically elected, based on open constitutional procedures. As these countries become more familiar with the democratic process, they are adjusting their political policies to meet international standards.

Work is being done by Latin American and Caribbean citizens to consolidate and strengthen democratic, judicial and human rights institutions. Canadian assistance has been and remains important in reinforcing these trends. Our emphasis has been placed on political transparency, with governments increasingly to be held accountable for their actions and performance. The military in most countries now shows a greater respect for civilian authority and has retreated to a more limited, proper role in society. Canada supports and is encouraged by this process of democratization. As with our work in Africa, it is imperative to remember that elections in themselves do not create democracy. It is incumbent on the donor countries to continue their support until a true democratic society is achieved. In fact, we anticipate the day when we learn from each other in this regard.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, Canada has long-standing, strong ties with both the governments and the people. These ties have been based upon shared parliamentary and democratic traditions, common values, close personal contact with government leaders, extensive tourism and major involvement by Canada's chartered banks. We expect these ties to endure and strengthen in the

years ahead. How should our relationship with the region be modified to reflect future global interests?

Mr. Speaker, there also has been significant progress in the area of economic renewal in Latin America and the Caribbean, which provides the foundation for sustainable growth and development. Many countries in this region are making considerable progress in implementing market-oriented economic reforms -- privatization, deregulation, emphasis on export-oriented production -- and are integrating into regional and global markets. Investor confidence is improving. As a result, this is a region that is expanding economically, and in which Canada has an increasingly important trade and investment stake that can contribute to economic recovery and renewal in Canada. We must seize these opportunities in the most effective manner possible.

The North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA] among Canada, the United States and Mexico foreshadows the fuller partnerships that can be constructed throughout the region. I have just returned from Chile: one example of a country already seeking accession to the NAFTA. Other Latin American countries are expected to follow. However, in the foreseeable future, not all countries will be in a position to meet the requirements for joining. I am interested in how our government might deal with this reality because I believe that Canadians want to encourage the social and economic progress of all developing nations, regardless of their current stage of development. Economic and social inequities in nations and within regions are known to be causes of instability.

Canada's Official Development Assistance plays an important role in our partnerships throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In this instance, there are certain similarities to our relationship to Africa. By supporting the economic reform process and encouraging governments to do more now to mitigate the associated social costs, Canada's aid program has:

- promoted sustainable development, particularly in the management of natural resources;
- contributed to a reduction in poverty; and
- promoted respect for human rights, democratic development and good economic governance.

Mr. Speaker, I know, from first-hand experience with grassroots projects throughout Central America, the good that can result from human-scale community development initiatives supported by Canadians. Our larger-scale official programs of development assistance have also had positive impact in vital areas ranging from food production to human rights, from the development of clean water sources to economic reform, and thus have contributed



to encouraging the economic and social improvements that are taking place.

Mr. Speaker, since joining the Organization of American States [OAS] in 1989, Canada has been an active supporter of the OAS in promoting democracy and constitutional rule, judicial reform and the protection of human rights. These challenges have resulted in opportunities to reinforce human development throughout the region. I believe that Canada should continue to support regional initiatives that encourage respect for human rights, environmental protection and trade opportunities. In the process, we must also work to ensure that the poorer nations are not marginalized. Marginalization of the less affluent countries can result in instability, mass population shifts from poorer to richer states, and threaten the process of newly emerging economies. These situations have global effects, and it is therefore worth working toward their prevention.

Most recently, we have accepted the challenge of hemispheric partnership with regard to Haiti. As one of the "four friends" comprising Canada, the United States, France and Venezuela, we will play a major role in OAS and UN efforts to restore democratic, constitutional rule in Haiti, to support the return of President Jena Bertrand Aristide, and to protect human rights.

Cuba poses another challenge. The Cuban economy has undergone serious deterioration; economic reforms have been limited, as have human rights improvements. However, I believe we cannot afford to marginalize any country of this hemisphere. Careful evaluation is necessary to encourage the full reintegration of Cuba into the hemispheric family, a process that will require significant change.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to the recent conflict in the state of Chiapas in Mexico. We have noted favourably the appointments of Manuel Camacho, the former foreign minister, as the conciliator for Chiapas, and Dr. Jorge Carpizo, the former president of the Mexican human rights commission, as the new interior minister. The cease-fire, the amnesty, the involvement in Chiapas of Mexico's national human rights commission, and the tentative agreement reached between the Government and the rebels are positive developments. We look forward to further steps to a political solution, involving alleviation of the fundamental causes of these problems in Chiapas.

Mr. Speaker, Canada's relationship with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be classified in general terms, as each country of the region is so vastly different. For those in the initial stages of development, simply providing education and poverty alleviation is not enough. We must also assist them in developing fairer trading relationships with their trading partners throughout the world. This is complicated by the

reality that the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are in different stages of development; therefore, we cannot assume that all countries will require the same formula.

Latin America is on the brink of having a more significant impact in international policy areas, and it now has a chance to pursue its vision of becoming an important international player. The challenge for Canada will be in the flexibility of our approach, and the way in which we accept the benefits that are offered through the maintenance and continuance of our relationship with both Latin America and the Caribbean.

In closing, it is Canadians' vision of the future that the Liberal government is trying to capture in this review process. The result of the process should permit policies that not only respond to the domestic needs of Canadians, but also project the international image that Canadians want their government and government initiatives to pursue. In all of this, we are working toward a better future, a future with considerably less poverty, effective sustainable development, and social and political equity, not only for ourselves but for people throughout the world, for our partners in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. I hope that you will assist us in achieving that goal.

Thank you.