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THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION

A Speech by Mr. Donald S. Macdonald, Parliamentary Secretary to the Honourable Paul Martin, Secretary of State for External Affairs, delivered in place of Mr. Martin to the City View Kiwanis Club, Ottawa, on May 3, 1967.

...This year, as we celebrate the centennial of Confederation, we have a special reason to reflect on what Canada has accomplished in the last 100 years, and on what Canada means to us today.

But we cannot afford to be concerned only with the past, or with what is happening inside our borders. We must also take a hard look at Canada's place in the international community.

Last week-end, we were honoured by the visit of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, the first of many distinguished visitors we shall be welcoming to Ottawa and to Canada this year. It is, I think, a tribute to the important place Canada occupies in the community of nations that so many outstanding world leaders have accepted our invitation to visit Canada during 1967, to see Expo and to join us in celebrating our centennial.

As Secretary of State for External Affairs, I am responsible for advising the Government on Canada's relations with other countries of the world. This includes our participation in the increasingly complex and significant work of the United Nations, and its associated international agencies.

Canada was, of course, a founding member of the United Nations in 1945. We are convinced that the United Nations, representing the ideal of collective international action, is an essential tool in building a peaceful and more secure world, free from the threat of violence and war. Canada has, therefore, been a firm supporter of the United Nations from the beginning.

One of the most serious and searching challenges facing the international community today is widespread hunger and poverty, particularly in the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This problem concerns not only the less-developed countries; it concerns the entire world. The United Nations, embracing nearly all the countries of the world and founded on the

ideal of international co-operation to achieve common goals, must help to stimulate the international effort required to overcome world hunger and poverty through development.

This evening, I propose to speak briefly about the contribution being made to international development by the United Nations and its associated agencies, and of the support which Canada is giving to this aspect of United Nations activities.

During the first years of the United Nations, the most pressing concern of member states was, quite naturally, the prevention of another war. Peace and security provisions were carefully spelled out in the Charter, but the passages relating to economic development were less clear. Nevertheless, the foundations were laid for an active United Nations role in economic development, to achieve the conditions necessary for peace.

There was, for example, provision in the Charter for a special organ of the United Nations -- the Economic and Social Council -- which would be primarily responsible for United Nations activities in the economic field. In addition, a number of Specialized Agencies were created, or associated with the United Nations system: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and others.

As more and more countries gained independence and became members of the United Nations, the organization underwent a fundamental change. The leaders of the newly-independent member states looked to the United Nations for assistance in achieving economic development, to make their political independence more stable and meaningful. The United Nations has responded by undertaking responsibilities in the development field, to a degree quite unforeseen when the Charter was drafted.

The magnitude of the United Nations commitment to international development at the present time is revealed by a single statistic: four-fifths of the financial and manpower resources available to the United Nations system are now being applied to development questions.

The extent to which the United Nations would be called on to concern itself with international economic development only became fully apparent in 1964, with the holding of the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, now known everywhere as UNCTAD. At that Conference, 77 member states of the United Nations, well over half the total membership, were united by their common poverty in putting the world on notice that a greater international effort to achieve development was required.

Although the organization established at the first UNCTAD conference has been in operation for less than three years, it has already proved of major value in focusing world attention, as never before, on the host of problems which must be squarely faced if we are to succeed in the great task of raising

the living standards of the poor nations. Aid is one front on which these problems can be attacked, and the UNCTAD has done much to encourage study of the ways to increase the flow and improve the terms of the resources which industrialized nations make available to the under-developed nations. But if the latter are ever to acquire the means to finance the imports essential for their development, their earnings from the goods they export to world markets must be substantially increased. This in turn implies improvements in marketing conditions for the raw materials these nations sell abroad, as well as adjustments which will permit them to expand and diversify their sales of manufactured goods.

Canada, as a nation dependent upon expansion of international trade, supports soundly-conceived innovations which will lead to broader participation by all nations in the international trading system. In the long run, we believe that all stand to gain if the greatest number of countries are able to prosper from the expansion of world trade.

The second UNCTAD conference, which will convene in India early in 1968, will provide the opportunity to review what has been done since 1964 and will set the course for our future efforts to expand and enhance the effectiveness of development aid and improve the trade opportunities open to the low-income countries.

To layman and specialist alike, the problems of economic development and international trade are complex and often difficult to grasp, the solutions much more so. But it is clear that the future of Canada, its prosperity and its security, depends to a considerable degree on the response which Canada and the other economically-advanced countries make to the needs of the under-developed world. Difficult as these questions may be, we cannot avoid them.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me that Canada has, in recent years, been able to increase its contribution to international development through its aid programmes. As many of you know, the Government has accepted the target of one per cent of national income as the measure of Canada's allocations for development assistance and plans to achieve this goal within the next three or four years.

A great proportion of Canada's aid is provided directly to other countries through bilateral programmes. But, in keeping with our belief in the vital importance of the United Nations and in the role which it can and must play in international development, a significant proportion of our aid funds is placed at the disposal of the United Nations and its associated international agencies.

In 1967, Canada ranks fourth among the contributors to the United Nations Development Programme, and second in contributions to the World Food Programme. Substantial Canadian contributions to these and other United Nations agencies are made on the basis of annual supporting grants. Canada also makes loans and advances to the World Bank, and its affiliated organizations, the International Finance Corporation and the International Development Association. The Bank is closely related to the United Nations.

While we have every reason to be proud of what Canada is doing, through the United Nations and in other ways, the task of international development is so great that we cannot allow our efforts to lag. At the present time, the average annual per capita income in the world's wealthiest country, the United States, is 25 times the average annual per capita income in the developing countries. But, if present rates of economic growth continue, by the year 2,000 the average per capita income in the United States will be 35 times that in the developing countries.

Because of the strength the United Nations draws from its universal approach, it offers an effective forum for encouraging the developing countries themselves to work out policies designed to facilitate development. There is, for example, no doubt about the need for measures to cope with rapid population growth, to bring about land reform, and to promote efficient, competent and honest administration. And these measures can only be effectively undertaken by the developing countries themselves, in accordance with their own cultural values and institutions.

But the developed countries, including Canada, will have to play their full part. They will have to be prepared to share their wealth through programmes of development assistance, and they will have to open their markets to the products of the new industries in the developing countries. All countries will have to co-operate within the framework of the United Nations system, and, bilaterally, in working out programmes which will be effective in accelerating development. Goodwill is needed, but so also are careful planning and sound administration, to ensure that available resources are effectively used.

It is in the interests of Canada, and of all Canadians, that our country should participate fully in the task of international development.

Because we believe that the United Nations must be steadily strengthened as a potent factor working for world peace, we shall support its efforts, and those of its affiliated agencies, to make an impact on the problems of hunger, disease, and ignorance which necessarily preoccupy so many of its members.

Because we believe that Canada's own future prosperity and progress cannot be secured in isolation from the rest of the world, we shall play our full part in the world-wide task of international development, the part which we must play if Canada is to be a "good citizen of the world".