

Statement

Minister for
External Relations
and International
Development



Déclaration

Ministre des
Relations extérieures
et du développement
international

91/33

"THOUGHTS ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMY"

SPEECH BY

THE HONOURABLE MONIQUE LANDRY,
MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR LA FRANCOPHONIE,
AT THE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN PREPARATION FOR
THE FOURTH FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT
IN MAURITIUS JULY 9-10, 1991

PORT LOUIS, Mauritius
July 9, 1991

Mr. Chairman,

You know the importance that Canada attaches to consultation among Heads of State and governments that share the use of French regarding major current political and economic problems. Canada belongs to numerous international bodies such as La Francophonie, the Commonwealth, the Cairns Group on Agriculture, the large multilateral organizations of the United Nations and most regional political, economic and financial institutions. This close-knit network of institutional ties convinces us that senior-level consultation among leaders from the most diverse backgrounds, but with a deep concern for the common good, is vital to the progress of humanity.

Thus, with each successive Summit -- we are already about to begin our fourth -- our Heads of State and governments have acquired the habit of, and an affinity for, discussing and defining common positions within La Francophonie. They have learned to know and appreciate the different viewpoints of all parties concerned on issues of major importance, and I do not think that it is incorrect to say that a growing consensus of opinion is emerging among the countries and peoples of La Francophonie. This is healthy and even essential at a time when major balances of power are being questioned and when both new opportunities and new dangers are emerging on the horizon.

It is an honour for me to present an outline of the economic situation that we will be submitting to the attention of our Heads of State. I take particular pleasure in doing so since the texts before you are the result of the joint efforts of experts from many of the countries represented in this room.

The phenomenon of globalization, or global economic interdependence, is radically changing the nature of relations between developed and developing countries. There are contradictory trends in the economic developments that we are witnessing, and we must step back a little if we truly wish to alter the course of history in favour of the developing countries.

The global economic situation is a paradoxical one. The developing world has made considerable progress in the past 30 years; income, consumption, life expectancy and education improved between 1965 and 1985, while infant mortality declined. Yet more than a billion people still live in poverty today, and this brutal, almost indecent, statistic does not exclude the francophone countries of the South. It is also accompanied by a host of familiar evils such as food shortages, debt, destruction of the environment and unsustainable rates of population growth.

On the other hand, I sincerely hope that the increasing diversification among the economies of the developing countries enables us to break away from the harmful monolithic ideologies that tainted North-South dialogue during previous decades. This diversification requires developed countries to tailor their responses to the specific needs and requirements of the countries involved. The very nature of assistance policies will thus be transformed. We must tailor our assistance to the level of development of recipient countries while continuing to give least developed countries the benefit of critical food aid and humanitarian assistance. Our efforts must increasingly support adjustment programs ultimately designed to achieve true economic co-operation.

In this regard, we cannot help but express satisfaction with the growing acceptance by developing countries of their responsibility for their own growth and their realization that foreign assistance is only assistance, no matter how indispensable it may be. Conscious of the new imperatives of the international economy, most of these countries have courageously agreed to implement demanding structural adjustment programs. This new awareness enables us to speak of a new partnership, related to the interdependence among our economies, rather than of the former confrontation between North and South.

But this requires us to think in new ways. We must get out of the rut of traditional foreign assistance. We must think in more global terms and tie assistance, debt handling, the opening up of international trade, economic reform and the strengthening of the private sector in developing economies to efforts to make these countries an integral part of the global economic system. We must clearly realize that the phenomenon of interdependence we are continually witnessing will impose new constraints -- especially if multilateral trade negotiations are successfully concluded -- which will open up markets to fiercer competition largely based on mastery of new technology.

The economic resolution is a coherent whole with a clear message: partnership means dialogue; dialogue means support; support means joint and complementary efforts. This is not so much a matter of the degree of assistance and dependence as of global economic co-operation affecting trade policies, access to markets, technology transfer, financial balances, debt, environmental co-operation and the cost of raw material -- in short, a genuine effort to achieve mutually beneficial relations among equals.

This renewed dialogue among our countries goes beyond a merely economic framework. That is why the economic resolution is closely related to the draft Declaration of Chaillot, to which I urge you to subscribe. This declaration on democracy and development combines two underlying themes that encompass both the political and economic development of our states. At a time when hard-line confrontation between East and West is on the wane -- hopefully for good -- we see that the new relationship between the governed and those who govern is being defined by the desire for freedom and the right to choose, in a variety of forms and in accordance with the spirit of each individual people. This democratization is a demanding art, a learning process that is not without a degree of trial and error. A long-term process rather than a static situation, it requires increased efforts as well as greater human and material resources.

It is no accident that development and democratization go hand in hand in this draft declaration. Although good government is essential to ensure the fair distribution of a nation's resources and to mobilize the people in pursuit of the common good, no government can impose the rigours of market law and political and economic reforms indefinitely -- unless these efforts ultimately offer a genuine promise of growth and development as well as equitable distribution of the revenue generated by such growth.

The current situation of the U.S.S.R. is glaring proof of these new realities. We cannot ignore this experience, since it is central to the planet's stability. It is not a matter of diverting aid flows at the expense of the countries of the south or of culpable negligence toward the Third World. It is a matter of managing the transition toward a new framework of international relations. La Francophonie must lend its support and make its voice heard on issues of current concern. It is a matter of relevance. I urge all of you to meet this fundamental challenge.

Thank you.