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NOTES FOR REMARKS

BY

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CANADA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AND
AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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***“North/South Partnerships: Different
Responsibilities and Opportunities”***

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Good afternoon.

First of all, let thank the Department of Public Information for organizing this panel. In particular, I want to congratulate you for pushing the envelope with this interactive approach. I hope that everyone watching the webcast feels part of the proceedings here today.

It is my privilege to join these distinguished panellists to explore how civil society contributes to our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs.

In Canada, the voluntary sector is an essential part of our social, economic, and political fabric.

Four years ago, the Government of Canada launched the Voluntary Sector Initiative to strengthen the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector.

As part of this initiative in 2001, the government and the voluntary sector developed an accord that set values, principles, and commitments to guide our relationship in the 21st century. Together, we committed to a more open, consistent, and collaborative relationship. This accord is a governance model that recognizes the importance of dialogue, debate, and advocacy in the relationship between government and civil society.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative builds on our long history of civil society participation in public policy and advocacy. Principle-based relationships with our domestic voluntary sector extend to the world beyond our geographic borders. Canadians have long understood and valued the existence of a vibrant and active civil society and its essential contribution to the well being of all the world's citizens.

That's why the Canadian International Development Agency, or CIDA, provided funds (C \$200,000) to support the Cardoso Panel. We welcome the attention given to civil society in the report, particularly the emphasis on strengthening civil society voices from the south within the UN.

This report reinforces the importance of partnerships to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving the MDGs requires government, civil society, and the private sector to reshape policies and embrace a relationship based on partnership and mutual responsibilities—on the part of industrialized and developing countries.

Since the launch of the MDGs in 2000, Canada has worked hard to align its official development assistance with these eight goals. In particular, we have concentrated on areas where Canada can make a difference, such as HIV/AIDS, basic education, and governance. Through it all, we have focused increasingly on achieving the eighth MDG—building partnerships for development between and among North and South at all levels. We know that global development requires local ownership.

Let me recap, briefly, some of Canada's actions at the global level that build partnerships with both Northern and Southern civil society.

In 2002, at the International Conference on Financing for Development at Monterrey, Canada committed to increase development assistance by at least eight percent every year, with the aim to double the level of Canadian aid by the end of the decade. Half of those new funds are allocated for Africa.

As Canada's contribution to the G8 Africa Action Plan, we announced the Canada Fund for Africa—a C \$500-million fund that supports economic growth, promotes good governance and peace and security, and invests in health, agriculture, water, and bridging the digital divide.

To address trade barriers, Canada committed to extending duty-free and quote-free access to most imports from 48 least developed countries. We remain committed to a trading environment where the developing world has equitable access to Northern markets.

Canada has also an active supporter of debt relief, enabling developing country governments to devote precious resources to social development and economic growth.

Finally, I would note that Canada was the first country in the world to introduce legislation that would allow the export of safe, effective, low-cost medications under patent in Canada to developing countries facing public health challenges. I want to stress this has been a joint effort among NGOs, Canadian drug companies, and the Canadian government. As such, the initiative encapsulates the promise and necessity of global partnerships to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The scope and breadth of ending poverty are too great for any single government, donor or community to achieve by itself. And no country or organization has all the answers. It is only by working together, sharing our experiences and resources, and building on lessons learned that any of us will achieve sustainable development across the globe.

That's why, for example, the Government of Canada works increasingly with other development partners on sector-wide programs. In this way, we can achieve greater impact and reduce the administrative burden on our developing country partners.

Partnerships are also an end in themselves, however, because they reflect the spirit of international cooperation—a recognition that it is intrinsically important for people to work together in mutual respect.

The Government of Canada considers a strong and effective civil society to be an integral part of development, both as advocate and agent. Canada believes that civil society plays a critical role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, both in the field and at the policy level.

Our development cooperation program has engaged civil society—both in Canada and in developing countries—from the outset. Northern NGOs, working in partnership with Southern NGOs, are instrumental in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs and in advocating for major global issues such as HIV/AIDS, mine action, fair trade, and the environment.

In fact, our recent policy on strengthening aid effectiveness recognizes how critical the role and contribution of NGOs is to sustainable development, to achieving the MDGs. As Canada strengthens the effectiveness of its development cooperation, we are renewing our working relationship with Canadian voluntary and private sector partners. Our work together is becoming more strategic and in keeping with strengthening aid effectiveness principles—local ownership, stronger partnerships, greater coherence, and harmonization.

These relationships should be grounded in fundamental principles of good governance and human rights with an emphasis on inclusion, accountability, accompaniment, freedom to advocate, and effective participation as agents of development.

In the same way, we need to engage NGOs everywhere in policy dialogue, including within SWAPs and PRSPs. This will ensure locally-owned solutions. North-South partnerships strengthen developing country NGO capacity to make the voices of marginalized groups heard and to influence policy. This contribution reinforces the various programming instruments and strengthens government, as well as public and private sector participatory democracy.

North-South partnerships also have a role to play in governance and accountability mechanisms in states that have weak systems in these areas. And they have an important role to play in failed and fragile states in humanitarian assistance, peace building, reconstruction, and strengthening civil society.

For example, the illicit trade in rough diamonds has allowed rebel armies to generate resources to buy weapons and wage war. The deadly trade has contributed to massive human suffering in African diamond-producing countries including Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone.

Over the past four years, the Canada NGO Partnership Africa Canada, or PAC, and the London-based Global Witness have been at the forefront in the fight against conflict diamonds. Together with diamond-rating countries and industry partners, civil society contributed to the development of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds, which came into effect on January 1, 2003. As Chair for 2004, Canada recognizes and values the continuing, rigorous, and central role played by civil society in this process.

Another issue related to peace and security is the presence of millions of landmines around the world.

Ten years ago this month, a coalition of over 40 Canadian NGOs met for the first time to explore the issue of landmines—a meeting that led to the creation of Mines Action Canada. This coalition was instrumental in getting landmines onto the Canadian policy agenda and led to the negotiation of an international treaty in Ottawa in December 1997 that would ban anti-personnel landmines. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines went on to share the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

Later this fall, civil society will join other participants in Kenya for the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World to create a new action plan that will help us reach the goal of a mine-free world.

In the cases of both conflict diamond mines and landmines, the collaboration between governments and civil society built strong momentum and produced positive results. Both Partnership Africa Canada and Mines Action Canada continue to work hard in their respective areas to ensure that global agreements live up to their promise.

Civil society is also instrumental in promoting gender equality, which is key to reaching the MDGs. For example, achieving universal primary education will not happen without reducing gender disparity in education and empowering families to send their daughters to school.

Change can result from deliberate actions of state or civil society organizations, and from legislative and institutional social reforms.

That's why a consortium of Canadian organizations—Solidarite Canada-Sahel, CECI, Care, World Vision, USC Canada-Mali, and SUCO in Mali—are working with local NGOs in Mali to advocate legal reforms such as a Family Rights Code. And in Tanzania, Care Canada and Agriteam are working together with Tanzanian NGOs and the government to mainstream gender equality in the national education plan for primary education.

Economic growth, like education for all, is integral to sustainable development.

In Ethiopia, the Canadian Cooperative Association helped to develop grassroots cooperatives to serve the needs of the poor. These sustainable enterprises came about by designing and testing innovative literacy and numeracy curricula that developed the skills of the poorest members in communities so that they were able to meaningfully participate in cooperative and community decision-making.

Last fall, Prime Minister Martin co-chaired the UN Commission on the Private Sector and Development, which looked at how to make business work for the poor. Key to private sector development is strengthened partnerships with all stakeholders—including civil society—to mobilize greater resources, knowledge, and creativity.

Canada is already taking concrete steps to implement the UN Commission's recommendations by supporting two initiatives. The first is a brokerage mechanism that

CIDA and UNDP are developing to create two-way linkages between developed and developing country enterprises. The second is a new local investment centre in Bangladesh that will help to decrease the cost of doing business in unfamiliar markets and increase market access.

Civil society must also work within their own countries—throughout the world—to engage the public in activities to reduce poverty and foster sustainable development. At the Canadian International Development Agency, we place a high priority on public engagement. So much so that we have a Stand Alone Public Engagement Fund to support the public engagement activities of Canadian civil society.

One of many Canadian examples is a global education program—“Kids Who Care/Des jeunes motives”—developed and launched by Foster Parents Plan to bring lessons learned in West Africa to Canadian elementary schools so that students can learn more about the Rights of the Child and habitat issues.

Among other public engagement activities, the Canadian International Development Agency holds an annual contest for youth—butterfly 208—that helps 14 to 18 year olds learn more about international cooperation issues and the connection they share with their peers in developing countries. They Agency also provides resources for Canadian teachers to bring the world into their classrooms.

These are a few examples of the power of civil society to effect change and to help build a better world for all. We all share mutual responsibilities in meeting the MDGs. What is key is partnership.

This is a challenging time for the global community. Development cooperation is a complex undertaking. Over the past decades, we have learned many lessons about how to effectively reduce poverty and foster sustainable development and peace.

What are some of the challenges we face?

For Canada’s part, our Strengthening Aid Effectiveness Policy, and indeed the OECD-Development Assistance Committee, challenge us and our civil society partners to demonstrate active and effective engagement with partner countries’ civil society and private sector.

Collectively, we need to demonstrate that we are demand-driven and are responding to the needs and capacities of our Southern partners.

Another challenge is defining and promoting the role of North/South civil society partnerships in Program Based and Sector-Wide Approaches, particularly given that many of these programs are funded through direct budget support to partner governments.

It is incumbent upon national governments and development agencies alike to secure the participation of civil society in the design and delivery of these programs.

Achieving the MDGs means responding to the needs and priorities as identified by developing countries themselves. It means scaling-up our efforts. It means a renewed focus on making a difference where we know we have the resources and the capacity. And it means close coordination among all development partners.

Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to your comments and questions.

Thank you.

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