

## **Remarks by IDRC President**

**Maureen O'Neil**

**at the Reception marking the Signing of a Contract**

**Between IDRC and the United Nations Office for Special Projects (UNOPS)**

**16 February 2000, New York**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you and to thank you for attending this reception marking the partnership between the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Canada's International Development Research Centre, now working together with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on the clean-up of the Dnieper River. I would like to thank Ambassador Fowler for graciously hosting this event and the staff at the Canadian mission for organizing it.

The Dnieper River, Europe's third largest, suffers from some of the most severe environmental stresses of any river on earth. In partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), IDRC has been working in Ukraine for six years on a very successful project on the environmental management of the Dnieper. The project has worked to build domestic capacity to diagnose and manage the essential cleanup of the river. IDRC is very pleased that, in cooperation with UNDP, GEF, CIDA, and UNOPS, it will be able to continue to work towards the rehabilitation of the Dnieper. I am delighted that this new project will allow us not only to continue to work cooperatively with Ukraine, but also to develop new working relationships with both Russia and Belarus. Just as we have successfully done in Ukraine and throughout much of the world, we hope to demonstrate with our new associates the effectiveness of IDRC's long-established approach to addressing complex social and environmental problems. This means partnerships with local agencies; joint decision-making; facilitation of linkages between local researchers and their counterparts elsewhere, resulting in information and technology exchanges; and utilisation of local capacity to initiate and carry out research projects. In our experience, this leads to an increase in confidence, practical know-how, and buy-in to research results by the decision-makers. In turn – and this is most important – all of this together helps solve the problem.

Together with our partners, IDRC is well equipped to carry out this trans-boundary project. Since the program, Environmental Management Development in Ukraine, was launched in 1994, it has been instrumental in enabling local decision-makers to manage the Dnieper more effectively and using the knowledge of local researchers. This new collaboration will develop regional capacity further. IDRC is looking forward to playing its part.

I am delighted that Mr. Jean-H. Guilmette, who is leading IDRC's team on this project, is here with us this evening.

Thank you, and enjoy your evening.