

## Presentation

### before the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Trade

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#### Personal introduction

Now I would like to make a few brief remarks under three headings:

1. What makes IDRC special?
2. What have we accomplished? (And what is being accomplished)
3. Where are we going?

#### 1. What makes us special?

The very first day that I took office, I attended the Pearson Centennial celebrations and was reminded quite forcibly by a number of people of why IDRC is a special institution of which Canada can continue to be proud. The values, the needs and philosophy that shaped the Centre at its creation 25 years ago are as relevant today as they were at that time; and the IDRC Act allows us to adapt to shifts in circumstances and retain our effectiveness.

Dans la foulée du rapport « Vers une action commune pour le développement du Tiers-Monde » de Lester B. Pearson, les architectes du Centre ont vu très clairement qu'il fallait favoriser le développement au moyen de la recherche exécutée **dans et pour** les pays pauvres, **par** des chercheurs de ces pays.

As the IDRC Act states, our purpose is:

*“To initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical **and other** knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions.....”*

- a) La philosophie du CRDI est la suivante : dans la plupart des cas, l'aide au développement ne peut réussir que si les scientifiques, les techniciens et les autres penseurs des pays qui
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en bénéficient jouent un rôle crucial dans la détermination des besoins et dans la conception des solutions - et c'est en partie pour cela que le Conseil des gouverneurs du CRDI est formé de personnes qui viennent de partout dans le monde. Autrement dit, la R-D ne peut s'importer si on veut pouvoir l'appliquer. C'est pourquoi le CRDI représente un atout R-D des plus précieux pour les pays en développement.

- b) Et le CRDI représente également un atout R-D pour le Canada parce qu'il y a son siège. Quand le Centre met sur pied un réseau scientifique international, il veille à ce que les chercheurs canadiens, des secteurs tant public que privé, y contribuent. Il a, par exemple, lancé une initiative ambitieuse, qui vise à intégrer les technologies de l'information les plus pertinentes au développement communautaire en Afrique. Elle s'adresse à l'Africain moyen et s'emploie à associer la technologie la plus perfectionnée au développement sur le terrain. Nous l'avons baptisée « Acacia » et l'exécutons en partenariat avec l'Association canadienne de la technologie de l'information (ACTI) qui, en ce moment même, fait de la prospection en Afrique du Sud pour les entreprises canadiennes.

## 2. **What have we and what are we accomplishing?**

Canada has many friends around the world because of IDRC. A study that traced the recipients of IDRC support over many years indicated this appreciation; and the application of those talents to the pressing problems of development. Those individuals now include senior ministers (Chile, South Africa), heads of state (Brazil, Turkey), and key research and development institutions (Benin, India, Egypt - and many others). (And incidentally many of those interviewed said that they welcomed IDRC as much for the contacts, the moral support and the advice that it provided, as much as for the money).

And problems have been successfully tackled -- (although there are great risks in trying to draw a straight line from a small research project to a solved problem; **and** in trying to claim all the credit. The foreign minister of Uruguay recently visited Canada, and I was privileged to have some very useful discussions with him. But one of the most gratifying incidents on his visit occurred when one of his colleague came up to me -- and reminded me about the EcoPlata project that is trying to create a multi-stakeholder coastal management zone on the all-important Rio Plata River, which is threatened by all kinds of uncontrolled economic pressures. This man said to me: "You know, IDRC has managed to bring everyone involved - the navy, fishermen, other commercial interests, researchers, and so on -- in a way that is unprecedented in my country, and in a way that may lead to something we can sustain. The Navy does not meet with fishermen in my country, and neither do big business interests. You have been invaluable here".

I look at INBAR -- the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan. This is a critically important industry in Asia and in Latin America, as you might imagine, and we are involved in research that we hope will lead to production that will, among other things, threaten delicate

ecologies less and reward impoverished women more. INBAR will be based in China under the direction of an independent scientific board. The results of this project's research will be very open, and very available. Those are our terms and conditions. That is our approach to development.

IDRC also benefits Canadians in the short-term as well as the obvious long-term benefits of a stable, more prosperous world.

I would invite you to check into a few of these examples:

- Canola is becoming Canada's leading cash crop. Thanks to IDRC projects in China and Egypt, new hybrids are being developed that will be of significant benefit to Canadian farmers. The University of Manitoba and the Crop Research Institute of China have already used Chinese varieties to develop disease-resistant Canadian canola strains.
- Scientists at the National Research Centre in Egypt in cooperation with scientists at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have developed a new, safe, biological pest-control agent. This pesticide is improving canola yields in Canada and soybean and groundnut yields in Egypt.
- A Canadian First National group called Medicine Fire is engaged in an IDRC project to improve the physical and mental well-being of native youth in Canada, India, Mexico and the United States.

We recognize that we are part of a larger and more complex picture. Partnerships with a range of actors - users of knowledge, policy-makers, extension agents, the private sector - are vital for successful problem-solving. And in terms of external agencies, we continue to work in a complementary way in close collaboration with CIDA - as well as other donors, of course.

On the technical side, many crop yield improvements have been realised, food processing and access to water improved, and health status increased. Benefits from policy changes are much harder to identify, but through the African Economics Research Consortium, for example, first class economic policy research is now done in Africa that enables a dialogue among equals with the IMF and the World Bank and has led to better and more sustained policies in many countries.

In another African example, IDRC has been supporting the indigenously inspired drive towards regional integration through the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Amongst other things, this activity has seen progress on monetary integration and greater intra-regional trade. A related endeavour has responded to the call for solid, arms-length advice to the Department of Trade and Industry in South Africa, by setting up a Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (with funding from GTZ in Germany). It too is working towards regional integration.

And I would be remiss if I did not mention the farsightedness that entrenched an information sciences and systems component in IDRC's programming from day one. This has stood us in good stead in helping to create and to facilitate those links for our recipients with other sources and seekers of knowledge around the globe. They now comprise a multitude of networks of like-minded individuals and institutions tackling similar problems and learning from one another.

### **3. Where are we going?**

IDRC has stood for innovation and social and economic progress in Canada and abroad. However, we have also had to embrace frugality -- more frugality than anybody expected the institution could endure without endangering its effectiveness. We have done what other federally-funded agencies have done. We have tried to lose weight without losing energy, and we have done that to the best of our ability. We have protected our core programs while losing 36% of budget over five years, 40% of staff, 50% of management positions. Coming in to what I hope is the end of this process, I have to report that I find an institution in remarkably good heart. I believe IDRC is an institution that has the right idea about development at a time when people are wondering whether there are any right ideas about development.

Canada already makes its mark in the world and earns respect through the qualitative aspects of life, rather than through wealth. But our economic prosperity will also depend on a healthy global economy and effective connections to the vast markets in what have been called "developing countries". Altruism and self-interest lead in the same direction: by helping people to help themselves, we also assist in creating new markets, new trading opportunities, new vehicles for Canadian investments. "Their" future is our future. We can only do well together.