

Speech delivered at the
30th ANNIVERSARY MARKET PLACE

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Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to IDRC. It is a great pleasure for us at IDRC to host you here today. It is quite a milestone to celebrate thirty years.

After thirty years of supporting research for development, IDRC is proud to say that we have made a difference to the lives of people in developing countries. The positive changes are results of the work of researchers in the South whom we have funded and with whom we have worked. We have worked with thousands of researchers over the years.

Ideally, in order to celebrate this day, I would have loved to transport you South, that is in Africa, Asia or South America, so that our partners may share with you their accomplishments in cooperation with IDRC.

Instead, I have asked our program staff to demonstrate, here in Ottawa, through this market place, what it is we are achieving and why it is so important.

By the late 1960s, the world was beginning to realize that the promotion of international development was a far more complex and long-term problem than anyone had previously imagined. Simple solutions, such as the transfer of capital, which once had been believed to be the answer, were seen no longer to be sufficient. In the late 1960s, developed-country governments had great expectations of science and technology.

Developing countries also were vitally interested. And the success of the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations' R&D programs with new, high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat - producing what was dubbed "the green revolution" - seemed to confirm the value of science and technology to international development. Yet studies showed that, at that time, only about two percent of worldwide R&D was being carried out by developing countries. Science and technology promised much, but this promise had not been realized for the developing parts of the world.

It is in that context that the idea of establishing IDRC was born.

It was very soon after its creation that IDRC realized that it needed a presence in the regions in which it was working. The first regional office was to be in New Delhi, but necessary privileges and immunities could not be guaranteed. In 1971, the Centre opened its first regional office in Singapore. In August of 1972, an office for Latin America and the Caribbean was opened in Bogotá, Colombia. This office is now located in Uruguay. Then followed in 1973 an office in Senegal. In 1974, the Centre opened an office in Beirut but, due to the war in Lebanon, the Centre relocated its office to Cairo in 1977. An office in Kenya was opened in 1978. Finally, in 1983, an office in New Delhi was opened.

We are very fortunate this afternoon that our seven Regional Directors are here.

One characteristic which makes IDRC an unique organization is its very corporate structure. The Centre is managed by an international Board of governors including 11 Canadians, one of which is the president, and 10 subject-matter experts from others countries. Most of them are scientists from developing countries.

Our Governors join us in commemorating this special event.

In closing, I would like to read a paragraph from the Speech From the Throne of September 12, 1968, the government's first indication of its intention to proceed with the legislation required to establish the Centre. "The natural riches with which Canada is blessed must serve to remind us that we have a substantial responsibility and a great opportunity in matters of foreign aid. My Government," said Governor General Mr. Roland Michener, "intends to press forward its plans and programs for international cooperation and development which include the establishment in Canada of an International Development Centre." On January 12, 1970, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, in his capacity as Secretary of State for External Affairs, moved that Bill C-12, to establish the International Development Research Centre of Canada be read a second time and be referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence. He said: "This can be a new and dynamic element in Canada's contribution to the global struggle to improve the quality of life in the less privileged areas of the world." He said further that the government intended to give priority to this aspect of its international development program and that the government foresaw an allocation of as much as 5 per cent of Canada's total development aid fund to the Centre.

After thirty years, IDRC is still a dynamic organization whose mission is to support researchers from the South and the North in search of a way to establish healthier, more equitable and wealthier societies.

Thank you for joining us here tonight, for celebrating with us the work that goes on in so many villages, universities, and cities in poor countries. Thirty years is just the beginning - Canada and IDRC have many contributions still to make.

Thank you very much!

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