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## Compilation of 50th anniversary tributes

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IDRC's 50th anniversary on May 13 has long been marked in our calendars. And although we had to adjust marking this milestone to reflect the current pandemic, we received many heartfelt and meaningful tributes from all over the world, acknowledging that IDRC's work remains as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

It is a pleasure to share some of these messages with all of you, in the hopes that they inspire and encourage you. Also, be sure to check out IDRC's various social media feeds where you'll find messages from many familiar faces and places.

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### **David M. Malone** (past president)

Rector of the United Nations University

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

I first saw the IDRC President's position advertised in the Economist in early 2008. I had known and admired several of the earlier presidents, notably Ivan and Maureen, but I was exceptionally happy in India, where I then lived and worked, and initially passed the advert over. Why then, ultimately, did I apply? Because, on reflection, I knew I would learn a great deal. And I did!

IDRC had long nurtured potent assets: Maureen over time had raised IDRC's profile and versatility hugely during her extended term and had nurtured a stellar complement of colleagues within the Centre. As well, Gordon Smith, an impressive long-time Chair, and she had assembled an exceptional IDRC Board, from whose guidance we all benefited hugely during my tenure. Having Denis Desautels lead the Board's finance committee was infinitely reassuring to the management team, and doubtless to staff colleagues too. As well, the Vice Presidents she had appointed, and their successors later on were each first rate. Commitment levels of the various program and other teams was exemplary, as was the case with our regional offices, which critically brought to bear their in-depth knowledge of local needs, capabilities and ambitions, helping us shape global programs accordingly.

Happy memories, of which I have many: meeting IDRC grantees in the field; the proliferation of partnerships with other donors (which had become second nature at IDRC during Maureen's term) and what we learned from them; the launch of Grand Challenges Canada, which IDRC managed at the government's request; and a deep dive with Rohinton Medhora, Bruce Currie-Alder and Ravi Kanbur into development thought with some of the leading scholars and practitioners of the past 50 years, including Amartya Sen (very supportive throughout IDRC's existence, including of Laurent Elder's team then

working on information technologies for development), which hugely enriched my understanding of the field and left as its concrete legacy a handsome and ambitious volume.

Onwards and upwards, IDRC, under Jean Lebel, an admirably dedicated, energetic and thoughtful Vice-President for Programs in my final couple of years at IDRC and the best possible successor, and also under another exceptional Board led by the singularly accomplished and knowledgeable Margaret Biggs.

Happy (institutional) birthday to all at IDRC! The veterans salute you.

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**Maureen O'Neil** (past president)

The creation of IDRC was brilliant 50 years ago and still is. Just think of the ideas that have moved from the lab or the desk to reality, the multiple ways in which people have better lives now than they did before because of the researchers and communities IDRC supported.

Think of the policy makers minds changed because advocates for a better world used the ideas and scientific evidence of those diligent researchers. And think of the communities of researchers we supported who kept on with their work long after our collaboration ended.

IDRC has always stood for new knowledge developed without political interference; from the beginning has worked shoulder-to-shoulder with researchers around the world; has shown that even in what might look like unpromising places new ideas find application and change lives.

There is no need to remind ourselves about the importance of the pioneering work in eco-health (led personally by our current president) as we send our wishes honouring IDRC's past and rally to an even greater future from our COVID-19 confinements. Although we are not together, our glasses are raised, toasting our beloved IDRC.

Let us remember the late, great David Hopper IDRC's first president who convinced Lester Pearson, IDRC's first Board Chair and the Board that IDRC should work directly with developing country researchers. Let us remember Ivan Head who recognized that in countries and continents under brutal dictatorships ways could be found to support researchers whose ideas would build a freer future.

IDRC's 50th deserves celebration.

And the next 50 must be fought for!

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**Keith Bezanson** (past president)

When I reflect on the Centre's five decade journey, I am always reminded of how remarkable — almost unthinkable — its establishment was in 1970. At that time, the ruling dimension in international development thinking was essentially that development was merely a matter of transferring Western "know how" along with some financial help. Moreover, almost without exception, the priorities and programmes of international development organizations were determined by those organizations and their governments in their Western headquarters. Yet, in that context IDRC emerged as a dramatically different organization with a dramatically different philosophy and understanding of development and even with an international Board of Governors.

So, among the many reasons for celebration after 50 years, I think first and foremost of the remarkable legacy of its principal architects (including Maurice Strong, Lester Pearson, Mitchell Sharpe, Wynn Plumtre, David Hopper, Barbara Ward and my dear, late friend Geoff Oldham). It was their visionary leadership that afforded IDRC its comparative advantage -- the mandate, scope, flexibility and independence to support and catalyze the building within developing countries themselves the endogenous science and technology capabilities needed by them to address their priorities and redress their barriers to their development. That in my view is the core of what allowed IDRC to achieve all that it has achieved and that continues to this day.

We know, of course, that this legacy model has been subjected to numerous challenges over the years, including serious existential challenges. But the Centre has contended successfully with these, allowing it to enter its sixth decade and to confront new challenges with the legacy intact. This is added cause for celebration and at the same time a reminder of the imperative of continued vigilance.

I could not agree more with what you what Jean Lebel noted in his video message to staff: the new challenges associated with the current COVID-19 crisis are unprecedented. For developing countries this is likely to be especially true. In addition to the massive public health burden of the pandemic they will need to grapple with significant external shocks --steep declines in remittances, tourism, and export receipts and in capital inflows.

The remarkable and still intact bequest of the Centre's principal founders and the countless achievements of the past five decades are cause for happy pause and celebration. The 50th anniversary is also a moment to look forward to continuing to apply that bequest to meeting new challenges.

I join with the sentiments with which my veteran colleagues David and Maureen in wishing you and all members of the IDRC family a happy birthday. As David said in ending his note, "onwards and upwards" and, as Maureen said in hers, "The next 50 must be fought for". May all good fortune be with you going forward.

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**Denis Desautels** (former governor)

It is comforting to know that IDRC continues, after fifty years of outstanding contribution to international development, to be so relevant no matter what the issues of the time may be. IDRC has been a precious contributor to the cause of human wellbeing and it is truly a treasure that must be preserved through proper attention, appreciation and support.

As a Canadian citizen who is very interested in the development cause, I want to thank you, your Board colleagues and all the staff at IDRC for your commitment to this wonderful organization and wish you continued success as you take it through its next phase.

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**Cindy Termorshuizen** (former governor)

Director General

International Security Policy

Global Affairs Canada I just wanted to drop a note to congratulate you on IDRC's 50th birthday today! I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a part of the organization's (hi)story! All the best as you head into the next 50 years; the organization is in good hands.

**Sarah Fountain-Smith** (former governor)

Deputy High Commissioner for Canada, UK

I really enjoyed our time together on the Board. We had such a strong sense of common purpose, and a shared belief in the value of the organization and its ability to make an impact. I feel honoured to have been a small part of IDRC's journey.

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**Nadir Patel** (former governor)

High Commissioner for Canada, India I learned a lot on the IDRC Board helped by my awesome Board colleagues. I'm fortunate to be able to continue championing the IDRC brand here in Asia with the regional office here in Delhi.

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**Molapo Qhobela**

Chief Executive Officer  
National Research Foundation  
Republic of South Africa

On behalf of the National Research Foundation of South Africa, I would like to convey our warmest congratulations on this significant milestone of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The prominence and influence of this well-known and respected global institution serves as an exemplar in its commitment towards Africa's knowledge and development transformation.

The NRF, and indeed South Africa, have always regarded the IDRC as a significant and engaged institution and partner, as evidenced by a number of prominent initiatives that have been central to South Africa's democracy, revival and international participation. The IDRC's involvement since the late 1980s in preparing South Africans for a non-racial democracy, contributed to a variety of truly impactful initiatives, and perhaps most significantly, the fact that more than half of the new cabinet inaugurated in 1994 had participated in IDRC-supported policy-oriented research.

The IDRC was equally supportive of the democratic government in developing a new policy for Science and Technology. Our more recent joint programmes including the Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium (TIPC), the Partnered Learning Group of the Global Research Council, the Canada-SA Trilateral Chairs, the OR Tambo Africa Research Chairs, and the Africa Rapid Grant Fund to be imminently launched, attest to a shared vision and values, and a deep commitment to excellence.

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**Carmen Rico**

Honorary associate professor  
Social and public communications department  
Université du Québec à Montréal

*Una linda fecha para celebrar en esta época de desinfectemia tan especial. Quiero decirles que de ese medio siglo, me enorgullece mi cercanía con el crdi, como me gusta decir a mí, desde la década del 90!!!*

A nice date to celebrate, during these times of such a special disinfectemic. I want to tell you that, for that half of a century, I am proud of my closeness to the IDRC, as I like to say, since the 90s!!!

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**Jean Lowry**

President CAIDP

University of Waterloo

On behalf of the Board and Members of the Canadian Association of International Development Professionals (CAIDP) I wish to congratulate IDRC on reaching its 50th Anniversary! An impressive milestone indeed. Globally the work of IDRC has benefited countless numbers of poor and marginalized people and helped to position Canada as a leader on the international development stage. IDRC's measured, thoughtful and ground-breaking work is highly valued by those of us in the development community and we will continue to look to IDRC for leadership in a post COVID world.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues once again for your support in developing and hosting the CAIDP Conference in October 2019. It is certainly a different world we live in at the moment, but it is my sincere hope that we can continue to closely collaborate in the future.

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**Ricardo Cuenca**

General Director

Institute of Peruvian Studies - IEP

Warm greetings and congratulations on the occasion of your institution's 50th anniversary.

For more than 15 years, the Institute of Peruvian Studies has had the privilege and the honour of sharing with you a research journey that has helped improve the quality of life for many people.

During this time, not only have we been able to develop knowledge that contributes to the design of better public policies, but we have done so with two characteristics that are particularly important for our own institutional growth.

First, the IDRC's long-term commitment has been decisive for developing a deeper understanding of the importance of building systematic and solid knowledge and has contributed substantially to the development of capabilities. Today, thanks to this, we have a stronger public voice in national debates.

Second, the IDRC's leadership in promoting and forming networks has been crucial for the development of an agenda for the Global South and has enabled us to forge bonds with regional and international institutional peers to work on

comparative issues in areas of shared academic concern.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to you for allowing us to accompany you throughout these years and our deepest appreciation for the work you do. Now that agendas will take a new course because of current events, it will continue to be an honour to share this journey with you.

Congratulations!

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**Richard Fuchs** (former IDRC regional director East Asia)

CEO Futureworks Consulting

Hantsport Nova Scotia I want to wish IDRC a very happy 50th anniversary. I spent 10 years of my life working at IDRC and I made memories and friends that will last my lifetime. Congratulations to you all and keep up the good work.

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**Olanrewaju Smith**, DVM, PhD

Former Board Co-Chair, GALVMed

Happy Golden Anniversary!

Allow me to wish IDRC a very happy golden anniversary. I am extremely proud to have been associated with IDRC and to have contributed in some ways to her globally recognized positive reputation through her contributions to development efforts over the last 50 years.

I can only wish her more of such efforts over the next 50 years.

More grease to her elbows.

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