Mr. Chancellor, Dr. Stephen Lewis belongs to that select company of Canadians whose achievements ennoble not only themselves but also their country. His singular contributions to public service give fresh credence to the words of Cicero:

The ability to do what is appropriate is a matter of trained skill
and of talent, the knowledge of what is appropriate to a particular occasion is a matter of practical sagacity.

A dynamic leader, and a man of daring imagination, he has traveled the globe for more than twenty years inspiring others and putting his ideas into action. After his successful tenure as Leader of the New Democratic Party, he was appointed Canada’s Ambassador to the United Nations in 1984. He immediately undertook a long and passionate advocacy of human rights, giving eloquent voice to the world’s downtrodden and dispossessed. As Chairman of the Committee that drafted the Five-Year UN Programme on African Economic Recovery and of the first International Conference on Climate Change, he brought his wisdom to bear on problems of profound importance to us all. Subsequently, as Deputy Executive of UNICEF, he championed the rights of children, especially those of the developing world.

Since 2001, when he was appointed special envoy for HIV/AIDS Africa, he has undertaken the Herculean task of raising the world’s consciousness about the plight of African men, women and children. This is one of the great public health issues of this or any other time, and we are fortunate that Stephen Lewis has devoted his astute intellect and capacious heart to finding a workable solution. Indeed, in language many describe as infused with fairness, he makes the abstract concrete, painting an indelible picture of the profound suffering endured so needlessly by millions in a continent he has grown to love. In so doing, he reminds all of us of our responsibility to our fellow human beings.

In 2003, this country installed Stephen Lewis as a Companion of the Order of Canada. The same year, Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health recognized him with the Dean’s Distinguished Service Award. Today, we honour this great Canadian and humanitarian whose generosity of spirit has gladdened the hearts of us all. Mr. Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate of this University, I ask that you now confer upon Dr. Stephen Lewis the degree, Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.