

## ASEAN Provides Forum for Region-Wide Security Dialogue

Asia Pacific's willingness to discuss security issues multilaterally has become most evident in a process spearheaded by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In recent years, security questions have been on the agenda of the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC), an annual meeting between the ASEAN foreign ministers and their counterparts from so-called "dialogue partners" (Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the US and the European Union).

At last year's ASEAN meeting, participants announced the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), an annual gathering devoted to the discussion of security issues. The ARF will hold its inaugural meeting this July in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition to PMC participants, foreign ministers from Russia, China, Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea will attend.

A Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Bangkok in May will prepare the agenda for the ASEAN PMC. At their 1993 meeting, senior officials tasked various countries with preparing papers for discussion. Canada was asked to present two papers: one on conflict prevention and dispute settlement, and one on non-proliferation. Australia was asked to prepare a paper on confidence-building measures and South Korea a paper on the situation in the Korean Peninsula. Canada has completed its papers and is circulating them to other participants for comment.

The ARF reflects two Canadian priorities: it brings together all major players, including Russia and China, and it has the ability to focus on regional security issues. Canada's principal goal now is to move the nascent dialogue from issues of process to issues of substance. We would like to see the ARF and SOM focus on, *inter alia*, conflict prevention and manage-

ment, peacekeeping and non-proliferation. These are areas in which Canada has recognized expertise and in which ARF participants could exchange views and develop a work program. As a first step, we would like to see participants develop a modest set of guiding principles for dealing with regional tensions and conflicts.

While the focus for multilateral regional security discussion remains with the ARF and SOM, some North Pacific countries are of the view that these dialogues will not adequately address their specific concerns. Unlike other Asia Pacific sub-regions, the North Pacific has no formal consultative arrangements, though efforts are underway to formalize a dialogue.

Canada has supported efforts to encourage dialogue at the sub-regional level — our own initiative, the NPCSD, was designed to promote this process. We continue to believe that a North Pacific security dialogue would be useful, and would want to be included in any discussions in the North Pacific devoted to broader cooperative security issues. Canada does not expect to be involved in every discussion, but seeks to participate in those where we have interests at stake and something to contribute to the process. ■

## Potential for Progress in South Asia

South Asia — where the countries of Central Asia intersect with China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, with Russia and Iran on the margins — remains an area afflicted with regional tensions. The most vexing problem in the region involves the confrontation between India and Pakistan. This arises from long-standing territorial disputes, including in the Siachan Glacier region, and Pakistan's alleged support for terrorist secessionist groups in Kashmir and Sikh separatists in Punjab.

Although the basic issues have not changed, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, combined with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, have transformed the overall dynamics of the situation. The Soviet demise ended the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship, first signed in August 1971, and there have been other Russian diplomatic shifts away from India on various issues in international fora. While Russia has aligned itself with the desire of the US, Canada and others to promote a multilateral regional security dialogue, the policies of other states of the former Soviet Union, especially Ukraine and the Central Asian republics, towards India and Pakistan have been ambivalent.

At present there exists no regional security framework within which South Asian countries can systematically address security concerns. Canada and other G7 countries have tried to engage India and Pakistan in broader security policy discussions and to move through these to specific issue areas such as non-proliferation. The most recent initiative, launched by the US, appeared to make some headway in encouraging India to accept a multilateral regional security dialogue modelled on the Middle East peace process. However, India remains cautious in its relations with the US.

Until a multilateral framework for dialogue is agreed on, Canada will continue its efforts to encourage progress bilaterally between India and Pakistan and to engage both parties in broader security discussions on topics such as non-proliferation and verification. The government recently decided to fund a project by Canadian academics and non-governmental organizations, including the Canadian Centre for Global Security, to explore the feasibility of initiating an unofficial dialogue involving the two countries. The Centre's report is expected by the end of March. ■



Secretary of State for Asia Pacific Raymond Chan lays a wreath at the memorial in Saiwan Cemetery, Hong Kong. The memorial is dedicated to Canadians killed in the World War II Battle of Hong Kong.