

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, issued the following statement today:

Recent statements by the United States and North Viet-Nam have indicated the possible conclusion of a peace settlement in Viet-Nam in the very near future. The Prime Minister, in his statement of October 26, welcomed this development and expressed the hope of all Canadians that this conflict can be brought to an end as soon as possible.

It has been stated publicly that part of the peace settlement envisaged by the parties concerned includes the formation of new international machinery to supervise the implementation, by the parties, of some of the terms of the proposed peace settlement and there have been speculative press reports regarding Canada's possible participation in this new machinery.

Over the past few years the Government's policy in regard to Canada's participation in any new peace supervisory arrangements in Indochina has been stated clearly on many occasions, both in public and in private. Accordingly the Government would consider favourably any request by all the parties for Canadian participation in such arrangements if, in the light of Canada's experience in this area, the proposed operation held the promise of success and it seemed likely that Canada could play a useful and effective role in it.

The parties concerned appear to have concluded that when a cease-fire goes into effect in Viet-Nam there should be some form of international presence immediately on the ground to participate in such supervisory functions as may be required. To meet this situation, therefore, the Government of Canada is prepared to place at the disposal of the new international supervisory body for the initial period the Canadian Delegation to the existing International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Viet-Nam established by the 1954 Geneva Conference. The Canadian Delegation already has offices in both Saigon and Hanoi, and would therefore be in a position to participate in the initial supervisory activities of the proposed new organization until the international conference provided for in the peace settlement. Developments at the conference would enable Canada as well as the parties concerned to determine what, if any, future role was appropriate for Canada in Viet-Nam in the light of the arrangements that emerged from the conference concerning the membership, the terms of reference and the operation of an international supervisory body.

If invited to the international conference, which is scheduled to convene thirty days after the signing of a cease-fire, Canada would, of course, be prepared to attend.

The Government hopes that, insofar as Canada's participation is a factor, this course of action will enable the initial cease-fire arrangements to proceed without delay subject of course to an agreement being reached among the parties concerned.