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PRESS RELEASE

In carrying out their tasks the International Supervisory Commissions should be able to function more effectively than the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea which, because of equal Communist and non-Communist representation, very often had effective action blocked, and which could report only to the two military commands.

The Indochina Commissions will each consist of three members - Indian, Polish and Canadian - and in most cases will be able to take decisions by majority vote. In those special and designated cases where unanimity is required by the cease-fire agreements but cannot be obtained, the commissions will submit majority and minority reports to the Geneva Conference powers. It will then be the responsibility of those powers to deal with the matter.

In addition to providing representatives for each of the three Supervisory Commissions, India, Poland and Canada will supply a number of military officers for the fixed and mobile inspection teams which will supervise the execution of the cease-fire agreements in the field, under the direction of the Supervisory Commissioners.

A study of the information available has led us to the conclusion that the Commissions have a reasonable chance of operating effectively and of making a constructive contribution to the successful implementation of the cease-fire agreements, and hence to peace in Southeast Asia. If our expectations unfortunately prove ill-founded, and the Commissions are frustrated by obstruction, then, of course, no useful purpose would be served by continuing their existence.

The exchange of views which we have had with those powers with whom we are especially closely associated in efforts to maintain peace and strengthen security, has confirmed our conviction that we ought to accept this onerous but honourable assignment.

Finally, we have been conscious of the serious consequences which might follow if we were to decline the invitation, since this could delay and complicate the implementation of the cease-fire agreements with unhappy, and possibly even serious results. We have no illusions that the task we are undertaking will be either easy or of short duration, but we take satisfaction from the fact that in performing it Canada will be playing a worthy and responsible part in an effort to strengthen peace.

The actual execution of the cease-fire agreements is the responsibility of the two sides directly concerned, functioning through Joint Commissions established by the Armistice Agreements. The International Commissions themselves have no enforcement obligation or responsibility. Their function will be solely supervisory, judicial and mediatory. Under Indian chairmanship, the Commissions will be responsible for supervising the proper execution of the provisions of the agreements by the parties directly concerned; will assist these parties with the interpretation of those provisions; will be available to settle disputes; and, in cases where disputes cannot be settled, will report the matter to the members of the Geneva Conference. India, Poland and Canada are also expected to assume responsibility at a later stage for supervising elections.