

Cochairmen, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me say at the outset that Canada welcomes the decision by France to convene this conference, as it has welcomed Indonesian initiatives to prompt a settlement in Cambodia. For its part Canada takes very seriously the responsibilities of participating in this meeting. I pledge to you, and to all participants, our active and constructive support.

The task we have undertaken under the guidance of our cochairmen is an awesome one, where the consequences of either success or failure will be great indeed. Can we finally end nearly 50 years of upheaval, war and enormous human suffering in Indochina, and make that area a partner in South East Asian progress? Can we help to close one of the darkest chapters of Cambodian history and open a new chapter of self determination, national reconciliation, respect for human rights and reconstruction? Can the bitter legacy of distrust be dispelled and progressively replaced by a climate of hope and confidence?

Certainly the international context provides scope for optimism. The last several years have witnessed an extraordinary transformation in the international climate. At the centre of this transformation has been the rapprochement between the two superpowers and real progress in ending the arms race.

But equally there have been signs that other long standing and destabilizing confrontations are now fading. In Asia the recent progress toward normalization of relations between the USSR and China, and the growing dialogue between other former adversaries in the region, are most welcome developments. Perhaps we have, as nation-states, belatedly come to recognize that the use of force to resolve differences or impose solutions in the end involves not only failure and great tragedy but insupportable costs to all concerned.

These warmer political winds that have started to blow have brought with them another very welcome change. For much of its life the United Nations has been prevented from doing its job of promoting the safer and more humane world foreseen in the Charter. Today we see the major powers working together to use the UN effectively, whether in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in Southern Africa and perhaps, in the future, Central America. In Canada, we take great satisfaction in this development. It bears out our consistent belief in, and support for, the UN and its goals, not for reasons of idealism but because of a hard-headed calculation that the UN can and does work. It also confirms our strong conviction that the UN as an institution must play a central role in any Cambodian solution. There is another reason to believe that new attitudes can prevail as we seek peace in Cambodia. Much of South East Asia is today a zone of hope,