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CONDITIONS FOR CANADIAN PARTICIPATION

IN VIETNAM TRUCE SUPERVISION

Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, to the Opening Session of the International Conference on Vietnam, Paris, February 26, 1973.

The first words of any representative of Canada to an international conference on the subject of Vietnam must be to congratulate the authors of the agreement signed in this same building a month ago. All the parties deserve the gratitude not only of their own peoples but of all those states which have come to regard the war in Vietnam as affecting their own national aspirations and interests. My Government is firmly of the opinion that the agreement signed here last month represents a magnificent and hard-earned opportunity, which must not be lost. This agreement, indeed, doesn't solve all the problems, neither does it meet all of our hopes; but it's very existence is far more desirable than the absurdity of the armed conflict itself.

Although Canada's agreement to participate in the International Commission of Control and Supervision was conditional, the Canadian delegation in Saigon has taken a leading part not only in getting the International Commission of Control and Supervision teams in place as required by the agreement but also in facilitating the other organizations established under it to begin to exercise their functions. The Canadian delegation has from the beginning been motivated by a desire to make the agreement work if this was at all possible. This will continue to be our attitude in Vietnam for as long as we are there. It will also be the attitude of the Canadian delegation here in Paris. I am sure that all other delegations at this conference are equally conscious of the importance of the part this conference has to play in transforming the present precarious cease-fire into a lasting peace in which the South Vietnamese people and only the South Vietnamese people will determine their future. Even though the Lao and Khmer peoples are not represented at this conference, their futures too are bound up in peace in Vietnam. They too are entitled to the right to determine their own futures for themselves without any foreign intervention.

The fact that there is yet another international conference being held on Vietnam is in some respects sad inasmuch as it reflects on the rights of the Indochinese peoples to determine their own futures for themselves. But the fact remains that the struggle in Indochina has become an