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## Canada's concern over extraneous political issues at UNESCO

*The following passages are from an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan J. MacEachen, to the Canadian Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Ottawa, April 2:*

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Over the years, Canada has contributed solidly to UNESCO programs — in science through the International Hydrological Decade, Man and Biosphere, and the International Oceanographic Commission — in education through support to UNESCO initiatives in curriculum revision, teacher training and the application of science to development — in culture through comparative studies, and exchanges of ideas, people, museum and research specimens, books and publications. Canada has been active in efforts to clarify conceptions and define good international practice in areas such as human rights, access to education, cultural co-operation and the free flow of publications.

Since the eighteenth General Conference of UNESCO, observers and critics have increasingly referred to the "politicization" of that Organization. Political discussion is nothing new to the United Nations family of organizations. What is relatively new, however, is the proliferation and dominance in some cases of extraneous political discussion in the various specialized agencies of the United Nations. You are no doubt aware that, although the publicity given to UNESCO decisions has singled out that Organization more or less as a symbol of undue "politicization", other specialized agencies have also been hit by the introduction of extraneous political debate in their discussions. What is disturbing is that we now see the possibility of the type of political debate, normally associated with the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council, threatening to absorb an inordinate amount of time and energy at technical meetings, and to undermine efforts to deal seriously with the substantive and technical issues these forums are expected to discuss.

This is an unfortunate development.

On the other hand, we must realize that the impression that extraneous political discussion is on the increase has been magnified in the last few years by the suddenness and consistency with which the Western countries have found themselves in a minority position on many UN issues. And this is being widely, and sometimes dramatically, reported by the media.

### Middle East decisions

This brings to mind the three decisions affecting Israel that were taken at the eighteenth General Conference of UNESCO in 1974. One of those decisions as you will recall, referred to the question of the Israeli application for membership in the European group of UNESCO. Israel was denied membership, notwithstanding Canadian support. It is deplorable that, due to overly dramatic press reporting, the impression was left that Israel had been expelled from UNESCO, whereas that question, as you well know, was never raised.

The other two decisions concerned the adoption, after protracted debates, of two resolutions, one on Jerusalem and the other on the occupied territories. In the view of the Government, UNESCO and the other specialized agencies were not created, and do not have the mandate, to discuss political issues of this kind and do not have the ability to take this kind of decision. In the particular instance of the Middle East, it is clear that the broad political questions involved cannot be taken into account in an adequate manner by a body like UNESCO whose competence is limited to educational, scientific and cultural affairs. It is for these reasons that the Government of Canada publicly deplores the frequency of political discussion at UNESCO and the introduction of questions extraneous to the purpose for which it was established.

