

Backgrounder on Canadian
Asia-Pacific Dialogue Proposals

The desirability of increased dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region on economic, trade, security, environmental issues among others has been highlighted separately and recently by the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada and Japan.

At this year's Houston Summit, the U.S. Secretary of State noted that: "We expressed our concern that the Asia and Pacific region has yet to see the same process of conciliation, military disengagement, and reduction of tensions that has characterized East-West relations in Europe".

Various agendas and various geographic membership groupings have been suggested for such dialogue arrangements.

Only one regional institution is now well-established in the region - ASEAN - which has proved to be very successful but which includes only six member states. A South Pacific forum has been launched, and now includes a dialogue arrangement modelled on the ASEAN example. A regional dialogue on trade and economic issues is being developed through the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. The Canadian Government, in a series of speeches by its Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, has put forward a series of proposals to enhance dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region. These include:

- (a) the expansion of the existing ASEAN process of dialogue which currently involves the six ASEAN states (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) plus their six "dialogue" partners (Australia, Canada, Japan, the EEC, New Zealand and the USA). Specifically, Canada has proposed that this consultative process be broadened by reaching out to include other states in the region. This proposal was put forward by Canada at this year's ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in Jakarta. It will be further pursued by Canada at the special Canada-ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Jasper, Alberta in October. Canada recognizes fully, of course, that any initiative to actually expand the ASEAN consultative process lies with the member states of ASEAN.