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Canada halts shipments of nuclear material to India

After 18 years of close co-operation with India, Canada has suspended all shipments to that country of nuclear equipment and material and is ending co-operation on nuclear-reactor projects and technological exchanges, following the announcement that India had exploded a nuclear device.

In a statement on May 22, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp, reiterated his remarks of May 18 that Canada was consistently opposed to all forms of nuclear testing and considered it "most regrettable that yet another country has now conducted a nuclear explosion". Mr. Sharp said that this action represented a severe setback to international efforts being made to prevent all nuclear testing and to inhibit the proliferation of nuclear-explosion technology.

Canada's long-standing co-operation with India in the field of nuclear energy had been for peaceful purposes only and had been accepted by India on that basis, stated Mr. Sharp, and although the Indian Government had declared that the recent explosion was for research purposes, Canada saw no distinction between the development of nuclear explosions for "so-called" peaceful purposes and those for military purposes.

Minister's statement

The remarks on May 22 of the Secretary of State for External Affairs follow:

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"Our concern is related to two important aspects. First, we are concerned as to the effect that India's action, whatever its motivation, will have on international efforts, to which Canada has been an active party, to limit and control the proliferation of nuclear-explosion technology for which there can be no distinction between peaceful and potential military application. For all intents and purposes, therefore, India now has developed the capability of producing a nuclear weapon. Many years ago Canada could have developed a similar capability but we chose not to do so because of

our view that the dubious advantages of having our own explosive device were far outweighed by the dangers to world peace and security. The development of this technology by India is bound to have serious and widespread repercussions throughout Asia and the world.

"Secondly, we are very distressed and concerned that this latest member of the nuclear club should be a country with which successive Canadian Governments have carried on over the past two decades extensive co-operation in the nuclear-energy field. This long-standing co-operation with India in the nuclear-energy field has involved the gift, under the Colombo Plan, of a nuclear-research reactor; the provision of credit, expertise, materials and fuel for two electric-generating reactors, and a variety of technical exchanges and training of personnel, etc. All of this assistance was intended to help India in meeting the critical energy needs of the Indian people and was provided to, and accepted by, India on the basis that it would be used for peaceful purposes only. We have made it clear in international discussions and in bilateral exchanges with India that the creation of a nuclear explosion for so-called peaceful purposes could not be considered as a peaceful purpose within the meaning of our co-operative arrangements.

"Canada continues to attach great importance to its general relations with India and remains anxious to contribute to the economic and social progress of the Indian people. It fully respects India's sovereignty and independence in all matters. It cannot, however, be expected to assist and subsidize, directly or indirectly, a nuclear program which, in a key respect, undermines the position which Canada has for a long time been firmly convinced is best for world peace and security.

Reassessment necessary

"In view of the serious implications internationally and for our bilateral relations resulting from India's explo-