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CANADA AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE PACIFIC BASIN

An Introductory Statement by Mr. R.L. Rogers, Director-General, Bureau of Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of External Affairs, to the Canadian Committee of the Pacific Basin Economic Council, Ottawa, April 4, 1977.

The emphasis that has been given to the Pacific area in the ten months since we last met reflects the importance the Canadian Government attaches to strengthening and expanding its relations with governments in the region. There were, of course, normal contacts at the bilateral level, but these contacts were reinforced through visits to countries of the region by the Prime Minister, the former Secretary of State for External Affairs, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. These visits reflect the Government's policy of diversification in its foreign relations.

In the Pacific, this policy has resulted in greater efforts on our part to co-operate with the countries in the development of mutually-beneficial relations. This co-operation is particularly important given the enormous economic problems facing the Pacific community today — continuing inflation, high levels of unemployment, and uncertainty over energy supplies.

The objectives of Canada's policy in the region — the fostering of economic growth, social justice and international peace and stability — take on increasing importance in the light of current interest in a new international economic order.

When Canada's foreign-policy review was prepared in 1970, it was noted of the Pacific that "the search for expanded opportunity, social justice and a sense of national pride remain fundamental to the search for stability in the region". This is probably even more accurate now than it was in 1970, and provides the underlying motives for Canadian Government attitudes toward the region.

The post-Vietnam-war, post-Mao period has created a sense of uncertainty for countries nearest to the Communist nations of Indochina.

Power balances are shifting as the U.S.A. assumes a less pervasive strategic role in the Pacific and as the Japanese review their role in the region. The attitude of the Government of Vietnam is ambiguous at this time. Will Hanoi concentrate on reconstruction or will it attempt to export its revolution to its neighbours? At the moment, Hanoi appears ready to devote at least some of its energies to rebuilding, and accordingly Canada is ready to offer humanitarian aid. On this point, however, we follow with interest the views of our ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) friends.

Policies designed to improve the standard of living and to increase economic opportunities in the Pacific area have been fundamental to Canadian efforts. Political, economic and commercial co-operation is being promoted bilaterally. On the multi-