

Honourable Herb Gray who, as Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce at the time, signed the Letter of Understanding on this project while on an official visit to Israel in January 1982.

There have been periodic trade missions between our countries in an effort to improve our trading links. Ministerial visits are also a regular feature of our interchanges and we look forward to receiving the Israeli Minister of Industry and Trade, Mr. Gideon Patt.

As I have already told the Senate Committee, I hope and intend to visit some countries in the Middle East, including Israel, later this year. I want to make this visit because there have been great changes in the region since I was there last. These have to be seen at first hand if one is to understand properly the responses of the countries concerned to events touching them.

I see my return visit to Israel as a reaffirmation of Canada's fundamental commitment to Israel. We have consistently supported its existence as an independent and secure state in the area. This is a basic element in our Middle East policy and is not subject to change. Because of our commitment, we have at times gone very far in extending our diplomatic support to Israel. Where, for example, the existence of Israel and its legitimacy have been challenged in international fora, we have taken a strong position against such efforts to undermine Israel.

In recent months, three attempts have been made to strip Israel of its rights of membership in U.N. bodies - at the International Atomic Energy Agency General Conference, the International Telecommunications Union Plenipotentiary Conference and the United Nations General Assembly. We not only opposed these attempts energetically because of our support for the principle of universality of membership, but in some instances we took a lead in order to defend that principle. At the IAEA Conference last September, for instance, Canada and other like-minded states were successful in obtaining a blocking third to defeat a resolution to expel Israel from the Agency because of its earlier attack on Iraqi nuclear facilities. Unfortunately, in the dying moments of the Conference, an incorrect procedural ruling on a late vote by one delegation which broke a 40/40 tie led to the rejection of the Israeli credentials for that specific Conference. Canada along with sixteen other states walked out of the meeting in protest.

One further point worth making about the hundreds of resolutions in the UN system: Canada has not drafted these resolutions and has no control over their contents. As a result, we do not see them as a satisfactory way of expressing Canadian policy although in our voting we take account of the basic thrust and balance of each resolution.