

Multilateral Negotiations

The USA and Russia are now seeking to launch the next phase of the Madrid Process. Foreign Ministers from regional parties and selected parties from outside the region are invited to Moscow on January 28 "for the purpose of organizing multilateral negotiations on issues of regional concern."

Multilateral negotiations are viewed as a means to focus on issues that cross national boundaries, and affect the well-being of all people in the region. These talks should deal with a wide variety of regional questions whose solutions require concerted international efforts.

The first day of the Moscow meeting will be dedicated to speeches by Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation. The second day will be given over to the practical organization of future work on agreed subjects of common interest, as identified by Ministers. While the precise agenda has yet to be finalized, it is expected that attention will be focused at the outset on such issues as arms control, economic development, water and the environment.

Canadian Approach

Canada, as one of the invited non-regional parties, will approach Moscow with the overriding aim of supporting the efforts of the cosponsors and all participants to move forward the overall peace process. Responsibility for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict rests above all on the parties involved in the direct bilateral negotiations. The multilateral negotiations will be no substitute for those talks.

However, the multilateral negotiations may offer an opportunity for the parties to acquire a vision of the tangible benefits to be gained from an eventual overall political settlement - a more hopeful vision of the future for the Middle East. Canada, with its practical expertise in such areas as disarmament and water resource management, its longstanding experience in Middle East peace-keeping efforts, and its developed relations with parties throughout the region, hopes to contribute to the efforts of all participants to build such a future. To this end, the Secretary of State for External Affairs has exchanged letters and held discussions with USA State Secretary James Baker and other colleagues, and Canadian officials have consulted representatives of both regional and non-regional participants in preparation for Moscow.