

The Paris Conference may resume - and Canada and other countries may be called upon to participate in UN-led peacekeeping and transitional arrangements. It is important that potential participants be adequately prepared. As part of this process, officials from my Department and the Department of National Defence are reviewing Canada's recent experiences in Namibia and elsewhere. Lessons learned there can be applied to improving the planning and organization of future peacekeeping operations such as Cambodia. The collection, exchange and assessment of peacekeeping information with both existing and potential peacekeepers, as well as with the UN itself, can only serve to strengthen the UN's effectiveness and reputation as a peacemaker.

In October, I dispatched a mission to Indochina led by Ambassador Sullivan, Head of our delegation for most of the Paris Conference, to explore and encourage the resumption of negotiations. One of the major messages delivered by Ambassador Sullivan in Hanoi and Phnom Penh was that of the importance of accepting a major role for the UN in any settlement.

In November, the Government of Australia proposed the establishment of a UN interim administration for Cambodia. That proposal has Canada's full support. It overcomes the problem of how to share power between the Cambodia parties, by delegating to the UN the responsibility for administering the country in an interim period prior to elections.

Like the UN-based settlement recently achieved in Namibia, this proposal would effectively guarantee that no Cambodian party would retain or acquire political power sufficient to disrupt the process leading to free and fair elections. That is the most flexible and reasonable proposal currently in play. It has been welcomed by all the key players in the dispute, with the exception of the Khmer Rouge.

Indeed it is becoming increasingly clear that the Khmer Rouge and its two non-communist coalition partners no longer speak with a unified voice.

At the same time, Canada and other countries recognize that the current regime in Phnom Penh is more than simply one of the four factions. Over the last few years it appears to have provided adequate government, and its record in most areas is far better than that of the Khmer Rouge Government which preceded it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the field of human rights and in basic respect for human life.

The peace process was moved forward in Paris last week in a meeting of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The meeting resulted, for the first time ever, in a significant level of agreement between the mentors of Cambodia's warring factions. Their views were summarized in a 16-point communiqué highlighting an enhanced UN role in the resolution of the Cambodian problem.