



Statements and Speeches

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REAFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLES OF FINAL ACT

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Opening Session of the Madrid Follow-Up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Madrid, Spain, November 12, 1980

...In July and August 1975, when the leaders of our countries met in Helsinki to sign the Final Act, hopes were high that we had made a creative and lasting contribution to *détente* in Europe and to world peace. Since then, and indeed in most recent times, those hopes have somewhat dimmed. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, Canada remains firmly convinced that the CSCE [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe] can be a forum of real value and that the Final Act sets out rules of conduct and standards of behaviour which, if truly observed, could bring great benefit to the people of all our countries.

I think it reasonable to say that, despite serious setbacks, the world is a better place for the conclusion of the Final Act of Helsinki in 1975. We have all no doubt fallen short of the standards which it established and have not fulfilled its objectives to the degree we might have done. Nevertheless, we have, over the past five years, seen important developments in co-operation between participating states through economic, scientific, cultural and other exchanges. These have unquestionably enriched life for our people and have widened the horizons of our governments. There has been, too, some improvement in the freedom of individuals to move about, across the borders of our states, in their lawful pursuits. There has been a recognition that, with all due respect for national sovereignty, no state is an island unto itself, able to conduct its affairs, either internal or external, in complete disregard of its neighbours. As in everything else in human endeavour, however, practice is not perfect. If I speak now more of the shortcomings which need to be remedied, it is because we should set for ourselves a high standard of behaviour and compliance with the international obligations freely entered into, in adopting the Helsinki Final Act. We are here collectively to examine our shortcomings; to find remedies for them; and to build in a constructive way upon our experience.

Mr. Chairman, the position of the Canadian delegation in this general debate begins with the Final Act. We must conduct a careful and objective review of the current implementation of the Act and emphasize respect for its principles. We can meet the intent of the Act only by judging and improving the quality of our performance and, then, by devising new proposals aimed at broadening our commitments.

Moreover, the Final Act is an institutional expression of a policy designed to reduce tensions and to increase co-operation in Europe. It therefore provides us with guidance for assessing the state of East-West relations, another of our tasks here in Madrid.

On this point I must note that the Madrid meeting has taken on a much greater importance than could have been foreseen when it was scheduled several years ago. The
