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to find a path toward reconciliation. We are convinced that lasting solutions to the region's problems can be arranged only by the countries of the region — this approach is fully consistent with the UN Charter. The Contadora initiative provides a basic framework for stability and co-operation within which the root causes of the region's problems can be more constructively attacked than by military means.

One factor critical to the success of the Contadora initiative will be a positive response from all parties concerned to President Reagan's welcome offer of verifiable demilitarization. There has been some response both from Nicaragua and Cuba but, as yet, no dialogue nor any decrease in military activity. This is essential if an effective settlement in Central America is to be achieved. Canada would support concrete proposals by the Contadora Group to stop the process of militarization and to verify and monitor the progressive withdrawal of all foreign military personnel from the region.

Canada is committed to supporting these regional mechanisms. If renewed efforts by the five countries of Central America could lead to agreement among them on a common approach to economic and social planning, Canada would increase its contributions to the necessary regional infrastructure projects. We are more than willing to continue to help all countries there to solve their problems by themselves. But assistance to these countries will be effective only once they have jointly decided to reject outside military involvement. A common effort of this sort could help to restore the political stability and confidence without which programs for development cannot succeed.

Perhaps no issues have more frustrated this organization than the successive crises in the Middle East. The situation in Lebanon has been particularly tragic. We hope that the cease-fire just arranged will hold. The internal problems of this country have been complicated by others in the region who have chosen, at Lebanon's expense, ruthlessly to pursue their own interests on Lebanese soil. Canada strongly supports Lebanon's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Foreign troops must withdraw unless they are present at the specific request of the legitimate government of that country. We must all actively support, through the United Nations and by any other means open to us, the search for a just solution based on national reconciliation.

Nor can we allow events elsewhere to deflect our attention from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nothing has occurred, in the 12 months since we last gathered, to lessen the burning need for a lasting solution which assures the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. I encourage all parties to exercise restraint. I call on Israel to rethink its policy on settlements. I urge all parties to enter into genuine negotiations. I call on them to make clear, in unambiguous terms, their readiness to accept the right of all states in the area, including Israel, to exist in security and peace.

Questions of disarmament and arms limitation have become the central preoccupation of our time. Negotiations between the major powers have yet to show significant progress. President Reagan's announcement yesterday provides some encouragement that movement may be possible on the question of intermediate-range nuclear forces. The proposals he advanced are an important step forward and demonstrate a constructive flexibility on the US side which, we hope, will be matched on the Soviet side.