

Distinguished delegates, sharing our experience is also a way to reduce our human distances. For this reason, Canada applauds the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for following Malaysia's lead in engaging Russia and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in ASEAN deliberations.

Russia is going through a period of extraordinary upheaval, but in its quest for new democratic and economic systems, it is drawing on the best political and economic experience in the West, Asia and the world. ASEAN clearly has a significant contribution to make in this dramatic and difficult transition.

With regard to China, Canada is encouraged by recent action by the P.R.C. to aid the peace process in Cambodia. Without China's participation, the Paris International Conference on Cambodia and the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) would not have been possible. And China's recent decision to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a major contribution to world peace and stability.

However, some recent actions are troublesome. The P.R.C.'s recent nuclear explosion test is regrettable; the decision to explode one of the largest devices in history is clearly out of step with the rest of the world today. It is wrong in and of itself, and it sends the wrong message, especially to countries such as North Korea, India and Pakistan.

Canada is disappointed by the continued support the P.R.C. appears to be giving to the repressive regime in Burma. At the UN General Assembly this fall, we should be collectively calling for a military embargo of Burma.

Once again, we must urge the government of Burma to release all political prisoners. We must call on them particularly to release Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally and immediately, and to restore the rightfully elected members of Parliament to their seats.

Canada is disappointed that a discussion of Burma is not part of our formal ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) agenda. Hopefully, we shall find opportunities to thoroughly examine this tragic situation, which is a blight on the regional landscape that cries out for concerted action. Aside from the human tragedy inside Burma's borders, spreading instability threatens the region. Internal repression has external consequences. For example, in this case, the large numbers of refugees fleeing to Bangladesh are beyond the capacity of that very poor country to cope. The impact on ASEAN members, too, is considerable. Canada understands and shares ASEAN frustrations in Burma's lack of response to ASEAN's policy of "quiet diplomacy." The time is ripe for more vocal and firmer action.