

combattants on the spot so that the cease-fire may be observed by them. As I see it, we are trying, under the agreements for setting up this commission, to ask a group of people representing four independent, neutral countries to tell the world what violations are taking place, in the hope that the international community will be able to influence the various parties in the situation to cease those violations.

I am emphasizing that we support what is taking place and that is not to provide a peacekeeping force. We would not support Canadian participation in a peacekeeping force under these circumstances, and I underline "under these circumstances". We think it is Canada's duty to take part in the observer force. When the four combatants, North Viet Nam, the provisional revolutionary government of South Viet Nam, President Thieu's government and the government of the United States wanted Canada to be a member of that International Commission, we had two alternatives. We could have said, "Go to the devil; we have been critical of the war and critical of the bombing and, when this supervisory task arises, we are not even going to look at it." We could have said that. Judging by the remarks of the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe, he might have wanted to say that. I see he shakes his head. I am glad to note that he would not have wanted that. Or, we could have said, as we did, I think quite rightly, "We will participate in the commission for 60 days and our decision as to whether we will continue beyond that will depend on what happens during those 60 days." If the peace is kept, if the cease-fire is valid and if we can perform a function, we will remain. If the cease-fire is not kept, if it is continuously violated and if the commission cannot perform a useful function, we will withdraw.

• (1650)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: That is what I understood the Secretary of State for External Affairs to say. I want to tell him that is precisely what my colleagues and I in caucus, after careful consideration, wanted those of us who are speaking in this debate to say to the minister. As he is the person in charge, I am pleased that he has said this himself.

We believe that the international authority to which this commission should report must be an absolute condition for continuing participation in the international commission. To have to report to the joint military commission of the four-nation combatants is obviously a frustrating thing. As long as the international conference cannot establish a genuine international authority to which the commission reports, the commission's work will be frustrated and useless.

I join the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe in urging on the government that when the international conference is held, the government be not merely a passive member, but that it take the initiative in a number of directions, particularly in the direction of insisting that as a condition of the international commission there must be an international authority to which the commission reports. In our view, that international authority is there and ought to be used, namely, the security council of the United Nations.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Viet Nam

Mr. Lewis: If the international conference cannot be persuaded to make the security council the international authority, then I say that Canada should not agree to any international authority of which at least the Secretary-General of the United Nations is not a member. Even if the security council is not directly the supervisory body, the Secretary General of the United Nations would be and, of course, would make representations to the security council, the United Nations Assembly and to the world. I want to emphasize that it seems to us to be an absolutely indispensable condition for the situation.

I support the general amendment moved by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe. In a moment, I will move a subamendment to it which, I hope, is now being prepared.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lewis: If it is not, Mr. Speaker, without appearing to be presumptuous, I will move it from the floor. Before doing that, I wish to take two or three minutes to indicate a hopeful note. Many of us have been sceptical, and rightly so; doubtful, and rightly so; disturbed, and rightly so. However, I want to point out that there are also two indications of positive results from the Paris agreement. The first is a statement by Mr. Brezhnev, leader of the Soviet Union, just a day or two ago, that he regarded the Paris agreement as an important step toward improving relations between the Soviet Union and the United States and that this could be a possible guide for the settlement of problems in the Middle East. Mr. Brezhnev's words clearly indicate that the removal of Americans from the terrible, barbaric and immoral war in Viet Nam has opened another door to the possibility of the improvement of world relations.

Second, I must say that I greet with pleasure the announcement that Mr. Kissinger is due to go to Hanoi next week. Publicly we are told, and I hope this is the truth—forgive me for having some scepticism—to make a diplomatic announcement. I hope it is true that Mr. Kissinger is going there to discuss economic aid to North Viet Nam.

I have no hesitation in saying that while Canada and every other member of the world community ought to give every assistance possible to help in the rebuilding of North and South Viet Nam, the prime responsibility lies on the country that is responsible for the destruction in Viet Nam. That country is the United States of America.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: They have the primary responsibility for rebuilding that which they destroyed.

The invitation to Canada by all four signatories is an expression of confidence. I hope we will act in a way which will show we deserve that confidence.

I have already said that we support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe. I hope with all my heart that the minister and the government will accept it so it can be an unanimous expression of this House. However, I want to move a slight subamendment. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin):