

At a UN conference on Central American refugees in early April 1989 in Guatemala City, the Secretary-General stated that UN plans for a peacekeeping effort in the region were stalled because of a lawsuit filed at the World Court by Nicaragua against Honduras. The suit claims for damages and compensation as a result of *contra* activities in Nicaragua. Also in Guatemala City, on 13 April 1989, *contra* leaders met with representatives of various Nicaraguan political parties. Amidst reports of reduced US aid to their forces, the *contra* leaders stated that they would participate in a fair electoral process in Nicaragua.

CURRENT CANADIAN POSITION

Canada has always openly supported peace efforts in Central America, particularly those of the Contadora group. Although it has never publicly condemned US activities in Central America, the Canadian Government has voiced opposition to third-party intervention in the region.¹ At the Forty-third Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1988, Canada voted in favour of a resolution urging the United States to comply with the June 1986 ruling of the World Court that US military aid to the *contras* violated international law, and that Washington should definitely cease these actions. In addition, Ottawa has provided Central American Governments with technical information on peacekeeping operations and on the verification of regional agreements aimed at ending hostilities. Canadian economic aid in the region, approximately \$55 million in 1987-1988, is another important aspect of Ottawa's policy toward Central American countries.

Canada has repeatedly shown its support for the Central American Peace Plan. External Affairs Minister Clark has indicated that, if formally asked, Canada will agree to take part in control and verification of an accord. Noting that "[t]he disputes must be resolved by those actually involved in the conflict," he has declared that "Canada is prepared to contribute to that process in any direct and practical way open to us."²

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias Sanchez visited Ottawa from 6 to 8 April 1989, and held talks with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, External Affairs Minister Clark and Finance Minister Michael Wilson. On 25 June 1989, Mr. Clark announced that Canada would provide technical assistance to the Supreme Electoral Council of Nicaragua to help organize its general elections, scheduled for February 1990. Mr. Clark stated that "Canada attaches great importance to the holding of free and fair elections in Nicaragua." An elections official from Nicaragua met with Canadian officials in Ottawa on 26 and 27 June 1989 for discussions on Canadian assistance to the electoral process in Nicaragua.³

On the issue of human rights in Central America, External Affairs Minister Clark pointed out that "no outside country has been asked to involve itself in the political aspects of Esquipulas II; the commission for Verification and Follow-up, which presented its report to the Five in January 1988, was suspended precisely because it did not limit

- 1 Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, 15 September 1986.
- 2 Department of External Affairs, *Statements* 87/49, 22 September 1987. See also: Department of External Affairs, *News Release(s)* Nos. 154 and 163, 10 and 16 August 1987.
- 3 Department of External Affairs, *News Release* No. 157, 28 June 1989.