

ASEAN Dialogue Key to Building Transpacific Community



The Canadian delegation to the ASEAN PMC held in Singapore in July. In the front row, from left to right: Mr. Howard Balloch, Assistant Deputy Minister, Asia-Pacific Branch, EAITC; External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty; and Mr. Gavin Stewart, Canada's High Commissioner to Singapore.

Following are excerpts from the address by External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty to the ASEAN PMC on July 26.

To determine the importance of Asia to Canada, we need only look at the trade figures. But the relationship, and the bonds between us, go much further. Trade has created economic bonds, immigration has created bonds of family and culture, and the increasing movement of our citizens across the Pacific has created a strong and lasting bond of friendship....

Canada is an active, committed player in the transpacific community. Our role in the world enables us to bring issues that affect this region to the table in international fora such as the G7, and to carry the results of such consultations back to meetings like this one. We equally value the opportunity to discuss the relevance of global issues in the regional context, particularly at this formative time and in this spectacular setting....

Security

The global political changes of recent years have forced us to reassess our traditional assumptions about security. It's a sign of ASEAN's maturity and vision that security issues have been placed squarely

on this week's agenda, and that ASEAN's partners and friends in the Asia-Pacific region have been invited to join the discussions at the ministerial level.

Canada agrees that an effective approach to security dialogue should be inclusive in its membership, engaging all relevant players. It also must be comprehensive in its agenda, reflecting the diverse challenges to security — some traditional, some not.

While we are at a critical and formative stage in this ASEAN process, it has been long in gestation. My predecessor, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, recommended such a process at a special meeting with his ASEAN counterparts in Canada in 1990. We then proposed a similar, although non-governmental, process for the North Pacific or Northeast Asia — a process that has borne real fruit in better understanding and dialogue. We have also, with our dialogue partner, Indonesia, sponsored a consultative process on the thorny issue of the South China Sea — a process that could serve as a model for broader application.

We favour identifying a common set of principles upon which to build a regional security dialogue — building perhaps on the Bali Declaration and drawing from the

broader international agenda with which we are all charged.

In this regard, I want to commend Singapore for holding the first ASEAN PMC Senior Officials Meeting in May. Not only will the SOM lay the groundwork for our annual discussions, but it will also feed into the growing network of complementary opportunities for dialogue on security in the region. These consultations should become a regular feature of our preparations, and we should offer a clear political endorsement of this process.

We are also very pleased that our hosts took the initiative to organize last night's informal dinner, which brought together the foreign ministers participating in both the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and the PMC. We hope that this dinner will be the first step towards a substantive ASEAN Regional Forum that produces greater transparency, increased understanding and a better guarantee of regional security.

Political

In our global and regional foreign policy, Canada gives high priority to human rights, democratic development and the rule of law. Canadians have upheld these values even when it was not in our immediate economic interests to do so.

There is no question, as we see from the shining example of Singapore, that stability is essential for economic advancement. However, we also believe that economic progress must be accompanied by political and social development.

The world increasingly expects not only economic leadership from ASEAN, but political and social leadership as well. As ASEAN countries continue their spectacular economic development, Canadians are encouraged by parallel progress in the areas of human rights and democratization. Peace, tolerance, freedom and respect for the individual are fundamental responsibilities of all governments — and are precious rewards in their own right.

I recognize that there is often a need to balance individual rights with the collective rights of communities and of societies as a whole. Individuals have social duties and responsibilities to their societies, as well as having individual rights as citizens. We are, however, passionate believers in the principle of universality, of the