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*Note du sous-secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures  
pour le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures*

*Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs  
to Secretary of State for External Affairs*

CONFIDENTIAL

[Ottawa], August 23, 1961

LAOS – PROGRESS OF THE CONFERENCE

You will recall that the Co-Chairmen agreed at the beginning of the restricted meetings to a schedule of items for discussion. This schedule was divided into two sections – Draft Declarations on neutrality of Laos, and the Agreement, or Protocol. (Telegram 1193 of July 24 from Geneva attached)†

2. The Conference has now completed its work on the neutrality declarations and has begun to consider the Agreement itself. When general agreement has been attained on any one topic in the restricted session, a drafting committee produces an agreed draft article, taking into account the views that were expressed on the subject in the restricted session. This Committee has now produced an agreed draft Declaration of Neutrality, and the text of that Declaration is also attached.† On two items of the schedule in this section (Nos. 13 and 16) discussion was limited to an exchange of views. These items concerned general undertakings by the Government of Laos, and it was felt it would be more appropriate for the Government of Laos itself to take action on these topics at a later date.

3. There were three matters in the neutrality declarations on which no agreement was reached, one relatively minor and two on which it will be very difficult to reach agreement. The Conference agreed to defer for the time being the question whether there would be one neutrality declaration, incorporating the declaration of the Government of Laos, or two separate ones. (Item No. 1 of the schedule.)

4. Item No. 8 of the schedule, (“understanding that ... treaties ... which conflict with ... neutral status of Laos cease to have effect”) was deferred because of lack of agreement. This item covered the part of the Soviet draft dealing with the South East Asia Treaty Organization. Similarly the question whether foreign troops and military bases permitted under the 1954 Agreement were to be allowed to remain was also deferred until later, and the French Representative on the Drafting Committee agreed to the general prohibitions on these two points in the neutrality declarations with this reservation.

5. So far we have had a report from our delegation on only the first item of the Agreement itself (Section “B” of the schedule). This is the preamble to the Agreement and the question whether it should refer to the 1954 Agreement has been deferred.

6. It seems evident from the pattern that has emerged so far that this first discussion in restricted session is recording agreement only on matters on which agreement already exists. There is no sign yet of a departure on either side from established positions. Of the items so far considered, it is the question of the continuation of the South East Asia Treaty Organization which has, not surprisingly, generated the most heat. Since the Conference began it has become evident that the United States has suffered two potential setbacks in future negotiations on this question; the Zurich Agreement between the three Laotian Princes stated that Laos would not “recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition” and both Burma and India have expressed themselves firmly in favour of the South East Asia Treaty Organization withdrawing its protection from Laos.