

[English]

ENVIRONMENT

TABLING OF REPORT ON MIREX

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 41(2) I wish to table in both official languages copies of the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the task force report on Mirex to the joint Department of the Environment and Department of National Health and Welfare environmental contaminants committee.

I might say that the full report is not yet available in both official languages and that is why I cannot table it, but if hon. members are interested in existing technical copies in English, they are quite welcome to request them.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION— MINISTER'S STATEMENT

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, in response to suggestions by a number of hon. members, including the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche) and the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), I would like to make a statement on the outcome of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. The conference concluded its work last week after a dialogue of 18 months. The conclusion saw many hours of intensive negotiations which have been widely reported in the press. I wish to give you my assessment of the results of the conference and their implications.

First, I want to make it clear that there was agreement on all sides that the conference contributed to a clearer understanding of the international economic situation and that its intensive discussions were useful to all participants. This point was explicitly recognized in the communique of the conference, and in fact such recognition was the key issue in determining whether or not there would be an agreed statement or report.

The conference was able to leave rhetoric behind and come to a balanced judgment that useful progress had been made. My reading of the world press leads me to believe that they have acknowledged the progress that has been made, and in fact any criticism that has been made of the outcome has been directed more at OPEC than at the performance of the developed countries.

There were, of course, disappointments. Developing countries were disappointed that some of their proposals for a structural reform of the international economic system were not met. I believe that such disappointment was inevitable in view of the wide-ranging structural change sought by developing countries over so many different areas. Developing countries did not agree among themselves on their demands and on their priorities. Some of the things that they were asking for

International Economic Conference

were probably not within the powers of industrialized governments to grant. Among these were guarantees on the purchasing power of exports and a general debt moratorium.

One of the most difficult problems at the conference was getting the developing countries to agree to focus on a number of issues where progress was both important and feasible. The positions put forward by industrialized countries, including a \$1 billion special action program, support for a common fund within an integrated program for commodities, and new commitments on official development assistance, constituted a significant improvement on positions of only a few months before.

Important agreements were also reached in the areas of energy availability and energy conservation, the transition to permanent and renewable sources of energy, food and agriculture, infrastructure in Africa, and several other trade and development issues. Real and substantive progress was registered during the final stages of CIEC which exceeds progress achieved at other international conferences dealing with north-south issues in recent years. Canada in particular received very warm appreciation from the developing countries for its decision to writeoff \$254 million worth of debts to the poorest countries.

Of course the industrialized countries were disappointed at the failure of OPEC to agree on an arrangement for continuing consultations in the energy field. I am disappointed that no agreement could be reached on this point. I believe, as I have stated elsewhere, that the OPEC countries, the group of 19, were in error. They made a mistake in rejecting our invitation to continue a useful energy dialogue. This was an important objective sought by the developing countries at the conference.

At a certain stage the rejection of energy consultations might have threatened all of the conference, the benefits of which were to go mainly to poorer developing countries.

One cannot easily evaluate a conference such as the Conference on International Economic Co-operation in terms of success or failure. I personally have never expected unqualified success, nor could the developing countries admit to unqualified success even if it were achieved, if only to preserve their positions for future negotiations. I have always hoped for that measure of success which is defined by real progress on the main substantive issues at play, sufficient progress on international economic problems to make it worth while to continue to pursue a constructive dialogue between developed countries.

In the course of my negotiations with the co-chairmen from the developing countries extending back many months I made it clear that in my view the best that could come out of the conference was a number of concrete results that would be regarded as progress and that that would lay a foundation for continuing a non-confrontational dialogue between north and south in other international forums. I believe that that amount of progress has been achieved. It has been achieved because of the direct interaction of ministers in the final stages of the negotiations.