

measures that have been taken from time to time to foster dialogue between the protagonists in the region. In this context, we were heartened to hear the references to dialogue in the statement last Friday by the United States representative, Ambassador Walters, particularly inasmuch as we recognize dialogue between the United States and Nicaragua as a key element in the search for lasting solutions.

We witness in Central America both an era of uncertainty and a time of frustration. Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica have recently held or will hold shortly national elections which constitute a renewal of democracy and thus contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in the area. But the economic crisis continues to take its toll. Border incidents between neighbouring countries are all too frequent. External influences have added pressure and continue to increase tension. Some of the countries of Contadora have just suffered terrible natural catastrophes and to them we continue to extend our sincerest sympathy and help. But as long as the people of Central America cry out for peace and reconciliation, we cannot lose hope. They must not lose hope. The pursuit of the efforts of the Contadora countries in conjunction with the governments of the region are, of course, even more crucial to them than they are to us. It is more important than ever, therefore, that Contadora pursue its valiant work towards a comprehensive regional agreement. There are those who diminish the Contadora peace process — those who say it has achieved too little, the question for the detractors however is obvious: where might we now be without it? Contadora has helped to keep the lid on an increasingly explosive situation; it has created a framework for peace. It will require even more patience and, moreover, the indispensable political will of the parties involved. Continued regional dialogue is the only possible means to find a solution to this most complex crisis. The task is enormous but it is patently obvious that the stakes are even greater.

Canada is willing to continue to help in the design of essential security provisions of a Contadora Act in response to requests from the Contadora Group. We are also prepared to maintain our development assistance to the governments and peoples of Central America. Perhaps most important, Canada and Canadians will continue to view events in this troubled region with humanitarian interest and concern.

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