

adverse effect on Canada's political, economic, social and environmental interests, is there no multilateral forum to allow the timely discussion of policy. Existing bilateral mechanisms in the North Pacific could be usefully complemented by a wider dialogue.

THE NGO TRACK

The NGO (non-governmental organization) track of the Canadian initiative, while encouraging an exchange of views by regional experts, is designed specifically to explore issues and prospects for dialogue and to focus knowledge and awareness on the North Pacific. Discussions have been held with York University in Toronto which has agreed to organize a series of international conferences to discuss the various options and approaches to developing improved relations among North Pacific countries. In addition to academic involvement, the participation of non-governmental organizations with relevant expertise in a number of areas will be sought. These conferences and related studies will have a direct influence on the development of the Government of Canada's policy agenda.

THE OFFICIAL TRACK

The official, or governmental, track of the Canadian initiative is an open-ended process intended to explore the merits of establishing a regional dialogue. Such a dialogue must not be the result of an attempt to transplant European models or institutions. The sources of tension and the nature of the regional challenges in the North Pacific do not lend themselves to such an approach. Rather, approaches to enhance stability must accommodate the specific traditions, history and geopolitical dynamics of the region. The continuing emphasis is on consultation, not negotiation.

To appreciate the differences between the Canadian initiative and those recently proposed by others (the USSR, Australia, Mongolia, South Korea), it is important for observers to understand that the Canadian initiative is not:

- an attempt to apply a copy of a European confidence and security building framework to Asia;
- a call for a multilateral negotiating session on land, air, or naval arms limitations in the North Pacific (such an exercise would be premature in light of regional security requirements, alliance structures, and current force deployments);
- intended to provide de jure recognition of existing borders or governments, or to challenge the de facto legacies of past conflicts (although the Canadian initiative, if successful, might provide a venue for participants to agree that disputed borders would be changed only through negotiation and not by force); or
- a call for a regional summit meeting of foreign ministers, or heads of governments or states.