

CANADA-ASEAN RELATIONS

In 1974, in recognition of ASEAN's importance as a factor for peace and stability in Southeast Asia and its potential as an economic partner, Canada began to study means to develop substantial relations with the Association. In December, 1974, in a section entitled "Canadian relations with ASEAN" in the Far Eastern Economic Review, Prime Minister Trudeau wrote that support for ASEAN and relations with its member countries were an important element in Canada's goal of seeking closer relations with the Pacific region. Canada took its first step towards relations with ASEAN when the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan MacEachen, wrote to the Malaysian Prime Minister as Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee in March, 1975 offering a programme of development assistance. Later in 1975, informal talks were held to discuss areas of cooperation. In 1976, both the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Don Jamieson, and the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan MacEachen, visited ASEAN countries. Mr. Jamieson committed Canada to formalize relations with ASEAN through a "Dialogue" on development assistance and economic and cultural relations.

The first Dialogue meeting between Canadian and ASEAN officials took place in February, 1977 in Manila and the second in October/November, 1977 in Ottawa. These meetings agreed on principles for development cooperation and discussed priority areas for cooperation. The latter were identified as 1) regional satellite communications, 2) regional air transport, 3) fisheries and 4) forestry. Studies of the first two areas did not produce projects. However, projects were developed in the latter two cases. A forest tree seed centre is being established in Thailand to train ASEAN forestry technicians and to supply tropical tree seed stocks. This agreement was signed on May 1, 1981 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Dr. Mark MacGuigan and the Thai Foreign Minister, Air Marshal Siddhi Savetsila, during the latter's official visit to Canada. A second project, to provide technical assistance in each of the ASEAN countries to further develop post-harvest fisheries expertise has also been agreed. Memoranda of understanding providing for the implementation of both projects were signed in 1981.

In addition, the CIDA Industrial Cooperation Programme which promotes cooperation between the Canadian private sector and that of other countries, has resulted in more projects in the ASEAN area than any other region in the world. Some