



Statements and Speeches

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THE CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

A Statement in the House of Commons on February 5, 1976, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen.

I wish to report...on the progress that has been made in initiating a dialogue among industrialized countries on the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. I have attended two meetings in Paris as co-chairman of the conference, a function I share with the Venezuelan Minister of State for International Economic Affairs, Dr. Manuel Perez Guerrero. We have worked together very closely from the start and I want to pay tribute to his wisdom, knowledge and good judgment.

The Conference on International Economic Co-operation is a new venture in international diplomacy, bringing together 27 participants -- 19 developing countries and eight developed members, including the European Community. Seven of the developing countries are members of OPEC, whereas 12 are oil-importing countries. The membership of the conference has been selected to be broadly representative of the interests of the world community as a whole, with the exception of Eastern Europe and China, which are not participating.

The use of co-chairmen from the two groups to head the conference and the commissions is a new technique in conferences of this kind. Limited, but representative, membership may ensure that any consensus reached at the conference is broadly acceptable to the international community. It may also make it possible to replace the highly-politicized and often sterile debate on international economic problems by a pragmatic and systematic approach to complex questions that cannot be resolved by rhetoric. Limited membership may also be conducive to better understanding, and hence to a more earnest and direct attack on specific issues.

The origins of this conference are diverse, and are reflected in its character. What began as a reaction to the quadrupling of petroleum prices in late 1973 has evolved over the past two years into a conference designed to examine many of the world's major economic problems in addition to those associated with energy. The conference will undoubtedly address the various demands for changes in the world's economic system that have been put forward by developing countries in the United Nations. Since the first impact of
