

The underlying regional security issues in South Asia cannot be resolved without sustained bilateral dialogue between these antagonists. The Government therefore welcomes the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan after a long hiatus. Canada urges both to resolve their bilateral differences in a spirit of compromise. Canada will initiate and support activities designed to build trust and reduce tensions in South Asia. For example, Canada will contribute to a UN-sponsored conference to explore models of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), to be held in Sri Lanka in June 1999, which will provide key regional actors an opportunity to analyze and discuss the varieties and benefits of CBMs that have been instituted bilaterally, regionally and internationally.

The Government views the engagement of civil society as a necessary element in fostering trust in South Asia. To this end, the Government will support the activities of South Asian NGOs working for the promotion of regional peace. In the long term, durable regional security in South Asia can best be achieved by the fostering of the habit of cooperation rather than confrontation and by increasing interdependence among South Asian nations. Presently, South Asia has only one region-wide institution: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Canada is one of the few countries to have concluded a bilateral agreement with SAARC, designed to provide a framework within which to strengthen SAARC institutions and encourage cooperation among SAARC member states.

In the Middle East, Canada also continues to support international efforts to address underlying regional security issues. Prior to the Gulf War, Iraq carried out chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, and acquired missiles to deliver them. Following the war, Canada has supported the activities of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), charged with eliminating the threat posed by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, since its establishment in 1991. A Canadian has been one of twenty-one UNSCOM Commissioners. Canada also actively supported the activities of the IAEA Action Team which was charged with dismantling Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons program. Since 1991, over one hundred Canadian Forces personnel have participated in the range of inspections carried out by UNSCOM and have assisted at UNSCOM's headquarters. In violation of binding UN Security Council resolutions, the Government of Iraq repeatedly withdrew its co-operation from UNSCOM inspectors, leading to the military action initiated in December by the U.S. and the U.K.

To break the deadlock in the UN Security Council following the bombing, Canada brokered an agreement which established three panels to assess the situation in Iraq from the perspectives of disarmament, of humanitarian assistance and of prisoners of war and reparations. Upon receipt of these reports, Canada will encourage the Security Council to unite and once again to prevent Iraq from pursuing programs for weapons of mass destruction.

While Israel maintains a policy of nuclear ambiguity, it is widely assumed to have developed a significant nuclear weapons capability. The Government of Canada is convinced that this program is not in the long-term interests of Israel, of regional stability and of global security. We call upon Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. Progress on the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) can only improve the climate for co-operation in regional arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Canada supports international efforts to resolve the underlying regional security issues in the Middle East in a variety of ways, including as "gavel" of the Refugee Working Group.