

The Government has also urged that unrealistic demands should not be placed upon the new commission in the initial stages particularly, and that no unrealistic expectations should be vested in it. For example, the commission should not be expected to begin functioning in any part of Viet-Nam before a cease-fire has been established locally by the belligerents themselves.

In respect of the international conference, it has been our view that it should be free to establish its own relationship with the commission or indeed with other provisions of the Agreement or its Protocols. The Government has also taken the view that participants in the new commission should pay the salary and allowances for their own personnel but should not otherwise be expected to contribute to the general overhead and expenses of the organization. This was an idea originally put forward that the members of the Commission should also pay part of the infrastructure. We took the strongest exception to it. Should Canada decide to participate it would signify its acceptance by a formal unilateral communication to the parties. At the same time the Government would also communicate any reservations it may have in respect of the documents embodying the settlement or in respect of the commission or Canada's participation in it.

When all the texts are available, the Government will examine them in the light of these criteria, conditions and viewpoints and make its own determination on the viability of the operation and on the existence of a suitable role for Canada. The Government is conscious of the fact that there are several possible forms of response open to it between a simple refusal to take part at all to a full and unconditional involvement. The Government's assessment of the relevant texts will also take into account the importance of contributing to a scaling down of hostilities in Viet-Nam and to the disengagement of American forces and the return of their prisoners of war. It is conceivable that the result of this examination might suggest a participation limited to certain aspects of the Agreement or a participation for a limited period of time rather than an outright refusal or an unqualified undertaking to serve. If so the parties concerned will be so advised and if they found this acceptable, Canada could take part on a limited basis.

Also drawing on our experience, we are conscious of the dangers of allowing ourselves to be frustrated as a member of the new international organization through the possible application of a rule of unanimity. One way in which this risk could be minimized would be by regarding the new body, not as a diplomatic conference held under the normal rules of confidentiality but as an international forum where the proceedings are normally open to the public. Consequently, we would not regard the new commission's proceedings as confidential or privileged in any way unless there was in any particular instance a unanimous decision of all the members to the contrary. We would instead consider ourselves free to publicize the proceedings in any way we saw fit to ensure that our view of events and if necessary the difference between our view and that of others were publicly available.

In putting forward our conditions, it was of course not our desire or intention to raise unnecessary difficulties or to seek any special position for ourselves. The fact is that Canada is in an excellent position to judge from its own experience what is necessary to a successful operation in inter-