

But I should like to turn for a moment to my discussions with Foreign Minister Allon. I remember these talks with particular pleasure - the Ambassador tells me that it is harder for you to pronounce MacEachen in Israeli than it is for me to pronounce Allon - well, I hope I do respect to his name's pronunciation, but I certainly want to do respect to the impression which the Foreign Minister of Israel created upon me in the course of a very good and wide-ranging session during which we explained our respective persistence in exploring new ways of cooperation between our countries.

I took the opportunity to reiterate in these official talks that the continued existence of Israel remains the cornerstone of Canadian policy and I stressed that this is not an attitude that we maintain passively but that we defend this principle actively and vigorously in international fora. By the same token, we refuse to become a party to attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the state of Israel in international bodies and we ensure that our policy in that regard is clearly understood, and I appreciate the references you have made, Rabbi Plaut, to these instances which I would like to refer to later in the course of my remarks.

The Foreign Minister of Israel and I also discussed our bilateral trade relations and I assured him, as I have wished to assure Canadian citizens, that Canada is ready to consider with Israel measures that might be used to facilitate Israel's entry into our market and that we would be happy as a Government to consult on ways in which our economic cooperation generally could be improved. I suggested that it might be useful if officials of our two countries got together to discuss specific ways to bring us closer to this common objective.

As an example of our already in place economic cooperation, I mentioned that the Export Development Corporation had been active in Israel and had extended a considerable amount of credit. I added also that it was still in this field, and still prepared and ready to consider applications on a case-by-case basis. Probably the most interesting proposal and the most valuable proposal that came out of our discussions on economic bilateral relations was the proposition put forward by the Foreign Minister that further acceleration of our joint economic cooperation might be achieved by setting up a Joint Committee of businessmen and officials which would meet regularly. While there is a great deal of informal contact between the people of Canada and Israel and while there is a flow of businessmen from one country to the other, there does seem to be some merit in establishing a more formal framework through such a Joint Committee to further our economic cooperation. I have since then had an opportunity to raise the matter with my colleagues in the Cabinet, the proposition was well received, and the view was that our bilateral relations could benefit from the creation of such a formal body. As Mr. Shalev has mentioned to me, now it is a matter for the bureaucrats on both sides to carry forward this political will and to establish a framework, an official framework, in which this further cooperation can take place.