

Canada-Russia Bilateral Relations

Canada and Russia are geographically the world's largest countries. They are northern neighbours, sharing the Arctic and Pacific oceans. Canada established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1942, but relations were cool until the dramatic changes that led to the emergence of the Russian Federation as an independent state. Contacts between Canadians and Russians are now developing rapidly.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney hosted the Vancouver Summit between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton, April 3-4. He urged the international community to agree as soon as possible on urgent support for President Yeltsin and the reform process in Russia. As evidence of Canada's own commitment, he announced an increase of \$200 million in Canada's bilateral assistance program to the Russian Federation.

The Vancouver Summit marked the third time President Yeltsin had visited Canada since becoming leader, illustrating the dynamism of the relationship between the two countries. In February 1992, Prime Minister Mulroney and President Yeltsin signed a joint political declaration laying the groundwork for new relations based on common democratic values. A long-term grain agreement and a memorandum on consultations were also signed.

In June 1992, Prime Minister Mulroney and President Yeltsin met in Ottawa to sign the first-ever Canada-Russia Treaty of Concord and Cooperation, an agreement establishing the framework for the global partnership our two countries are entering into. This political document was backed up by a modern agreement on trade and commerce attuned to Russia's

move to a market economy, a memorandum on agricultural co-operation, and a joint declaration on the conversion of defence industries.

As a member of the G-7, Canada is working with its Western partners to provide more effective support for Russia's courageous political and economic reforms. Canada participated in the Tokyo meeting of G-7 foreign and finance ministers, which launched the new US\$43 billion multilateral assistance package for Russia. More than 100 Canadian technical assistance projects are under way in Russia, providing practical skills and expertise in energy, agriculture, forestry, the environment and democratic development.

In addition to these new initiatives, Canada has accepted Russia as the continuation of the U.S.S.R. in respect of all Soviet international rights and obligations. Those Canada-U.S.S.R. treaties that have not been replaced remain in force.

Canada supported Russia's assumption of the former Soviet Union's membership in the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Canada backs Russia's co-sponsorship of the Middle East peace process, and has benefitted from Russia's support for peace initiatives in the former Yugoslavia.

Canada's external affairs minister and the Russian foreign minister meet regularly to consult on bilateral and international issues. The external affairs minister's most recent visit to Russia took place February 2-5.