

Canada-ASEAN Developments

Press Conference in Jakarta

SSEA Discusses PMC and Canada's Relations with ASEAN

Question:

What is Canada's view of the results of this meeting in the ASEAN Pacific Cooperation field?

Mr. Chrétien:

I think that it was a very good meeting. The Pacific is important for Canada. As you know we are a Pacific Ocean nation and we agreed with the proposition that was on the table yesterday: we have to establish with ASEAN the priorities in terms of development and this idea of giving priority to human resources suits us very very well. Human resources development has always been very high on our priority list and has figured prominently in our bilateral programmes with the different ASEAN nations. If it is the priority for everybody it is good. That will permit some coordination of what is happening. I think that the maturity of the ASEAN association is very impressive and they are really searching for increasing effectiveness of both their social and economic development here. And they want to do it in collaboration with the other Pacific nations who are part of the conference.

Question:

Can these steps grow into a Pacific community of some kind?

Mr. Chrétien:

There was a consensus that there is no need for the creation at this time of a new body. . . We do not want to create a new body that will have a life of its own. We want to keep it under the control of ministerial direction through the meeting we are having annually.

Question:

What is the objective in focussing on human resources development?

Mr. Chrétien:

The goal is to achieve better coordination and to establish the proper priorities among the participating nations you know America, Canada, and Japan and others are involved in programmes and there is probably duplication and lack of efficiency. There is accordingly a need to do the coordination without having to create a body that will just augment the bureaucratic content of the relations. We felt that we had enough institutions at this time to handle the problem.

Question:

Is it true that Canada agreed that this Pacific cooperation should be tied to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting?

Mr. Chrétien:

The practice has been that ASEAN Foreign Ministers invite five or six nations to join them at this conference after their annual meeting. We find it is a very convenient way to settle the problems. You have the conference of the Foreign Ministers of the six countries on the first few days and after that the Americans, Canadians, Japanese, Australians, New Zealanders and European Economic Community join in the last two days of the meetings so that gives a full week. For Canada it is a good occasion, and particularly for me. For example it gave me an occasion to have a bilateral discussion with Mr. Shultz in the first week I have been appointed Deputy Foreign Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs and at the same time to meet some of our old friends like the Japanese, the Australians, the New Zealanders and so on. The last two are members of the Commonwealth like us. I find it has been very productive so far.

Question:

One of the ASEAN documents implied that Canada might not be doing quite enough in terms of economic cooperation with ASEAN compared to the other dialogue partners. Did you gain the impression that ASEAN would like Canada to do more?

Mr. Chrétien:

There was no complaint. We talked about trade. We deplore a situation where the trade between the two, the ASEAN nations and Canada, could be bigger on both sides and we are working on that. And they were quite satisfied that there is enough increasing in exchanges. Exports to Canada have increased substantially in the last year by more than \$100 million. One of the ministers made the point that sometimes they are not themselves, when they are looking for exports, perhaps being aggressive enough to penetrate the Canadian market. Because you know we are on the Pacific but they tend to look at the USA and they go to the United States of America probably and they do not make the side trip to Canada. They should do more, because we are a good market in Canada.

Question:

Will the Pacific cooperation activities for Canada be coordinated through the new foundation you have established?

Mr. Chrétien:

No. The Asia Pacific Foundation is designed on its own. It is a federal government, provincial government, private sector institution to increase the knowledge, the understanding and the communications with the ASEAN nations and the other Pacific nations. Because Canada is a Pacific country, and a statement I made quite often in Canada is that the Pacific will be for Canada in the next hundred years what the Atlantic was in the last hundred years. Because the commerce, the trade will be more on the Pacific, there are more people on the Pacific, the money is on the Pacific now, the technology tends to be on the Pacific, so we are in a good position being a country having access to both the Atlantic and the Pacific. But at this moment we are trying to give, to put more emphasis and give more resources to the Pacific and for me despite the fact that we are having an election in September, Prime Minister Turner and I decided that I had to come anyway. We decided that it was very important to show our interest in the Pacific.