



Statements and Speeches

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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Statement by Shirley Martin, to the Fortieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 25, 1985.

Mr. President. This year marks the third occasion upon which the question of Central America has been brought before this body. I am confident that there is no one here who would argue against the need for our discussions to reflect the support of the entire international community for the development, acceptance and implementation of a workable, durable and comprehensive peace agreement for the entire region. The energetic attempts of the past six weeks led to renewed hope that such an agreement would soon be within our grasp. Alas, sadly and once again, we seem to be watching these undertakings trickle away like sand through the hour glass of negotiations.

After three years of continuous efforts by the countries of the Contadora Group [Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and Panama] and the countries of Central America, after three years of slow progress, frustrations and dangerous incidents, we could be tempted collectively to seize upon a superficial solution — a quick fix — something that could be wrapped in all the right ribbons and signed by all the key players to the sound of trumpets. However, the history of cosmetic agreements designed for short-term solutions is well known. Canada believes that the result of such an approach now in Central America would be counterproductive and potentially disastrous.

It is from this perspective that Canada has attentively followed the events in the region over the course of the past year. In fact, when one looks back at the task that Contadora undertook some three years ago, one can only admire its tenacity, perseverance and demonstrated skill. At the outset, the obstacles to this task appeared insurmountable given the diversity of motives, the military disequilibrium, externally supported guerilla campaigns, the growing East-West dimension of the crisis as well as a declining standard of living for all countries of the area and, maybe above all, an overwhelming lack of mutual confidence that characterized the first months of negotiations.

Under these adverse circumstances, the agreement on the 21-point list of objectives in September 1983 could only be seen as a remarkable and highly significant accomplishment. At that time, Canada expressed the view in the General Assembly that enduring solutions to the region's problems could best be reached by the countries of the region. As we noted then, this approach is consistent with the highest principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter. Canada maintains this position on both points. What is needed now is a renewal of faith, a new impetus and above all a willingness to invest the confidence and hard work required to ensure just and lasting solutions within the area. The support of the United Nations and the world community are also essential elements in the search for peace, human dignity and eventual prosperity.

Canada views the current upheaval and unrest in Central America as primarily a function of chronic
