

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 4, 1975

**STATEMENT
DISCOURS**



OPENING STATEMENT AT
PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE HONOURABLE
ALLAN J. MACEachEN,
OTTAWA, APRIL 4, 1975 //

The Canadian Government is very seriously concerned by the tragic situation in Indochina. Clearly a major military offensive is taking place in South Viet-Nam; we deplore this, and especially we deplore the suffering which it is causing for the civilian population. As I said in my statement of March 27, the Government deeply regrets that the parties concerned have been unable to find a peaceful political solution. We appeal to all the parties concerned to end the fighting and to work toward a negotiated solution.

Canada must recognize that it is not in a position to play a significant political role in the current situation. There are some things, however, that Canada can and should do. We can and should do what we can to alleviate the suffering of the civilian populations in the affected countries; I shall have more to say about that in a moment. We can and should do something to meet the desires of refugees for whom departure from those countries seems necessary, and the desires of Canadians who wish to take them into their own families in Canada. I am thinking especially of orphans and of the close relatives of Canadian citizens and residents of Vietnamese origin. My colleague the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has made statements in that connection. We must also be concerned for the safety and, as necessary, for the evacuation of Canadians in South Viet-Nam.

Most Canadians in South Viet-Nam are now concentrated in the Saigon area. Some have already left, and arrangements are being made to assist the others to leave the country.

With respect to humanitarian assistance I can make the following announcement. To help meet the urgent need for humanitarian relief programmes in South Viet-Nam and Cambodia, arrangements are being made to provide emergency assistance immediately and in the longer term. The first phase of Canada's response to this changing situation will consist of a total of up to \$6.25 million. On March 27, I announced a portion of this, a \$1.75 million dollar contribution to UNICEF, UNHCR and Red Cross emergency relief programmes. An additional \$2 million dollars will be contributed through CIDA to these organizations. We also plan to provide \$2.5 million dollars in food aid based on need and the availability of secure distribution points. A second phase of relief assistance is also being planned and the specifics of this phase will be announced later. Details of the present programme of humanitarian assistance are given in the press release distributed here today.