



# PRESS RELEASE

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The Department of External Affairs announced today that the annual meeting of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee will be held in Ottawa from October 4 to October 9. This meeting, which will be attended by Cabinet Ministers or other representatives from fourteen Colombo Plan countries, will be preceded by a meeting of officials from these countries which will commence on September 20.

The Ottawa meeting of the Consultative Committee will be the first to take place in North America. Previous meetings were held in Australia, United Kingdom, Ceylon, Pakistan and India.

Both the official and the ministerial sessions will be held in the Parliament Buildings. The opening ministerial session, which will probably take place in the House of Commons chamber, will be open to the public. It will be addressed by Prime Minister St. Laurent and by leaders of some of the visiting delegations.

The members of the Consultative Committee are Australia, Burma, Canada, Cambodia, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States and Viet-Nam. Dependent territories of the United Kingdom in South-East Asia, viz., the Federation of Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, North Borneo and Sarawak also fall within the scope of the Colombo Plan. Thailand and the Philippines have sent observers to previous meetings of the Consultative Committee and have been invited to be represented at the Ottawa meetings.

Two agencies of the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far-East, which have been closely associated with many Colombo Plan countries in the field of economic development, have sent observers to previous meetings of the Consultative Committee, and it is expected that they will be represented at the Ottawa meetings.

The Director of the Council for Technical Co-Operation, which is concerned with the technical assistance as distinct from the capital development aspect of the Colombo Plan, and the head of the Colombo Plan Information Unit, a new office which will shortly commence operation, are also expected to attend the Ottawa meetings.

## Note for Correspondents

The Consultative Committee meeting will bring together delegates from many different parts of the world. The countries participating in or associated with the Colombo Plan for Co-Operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia now include not only most of the Commonwealth countries and the United States but also all the independent countries and most of the dependent territories in South and South-East Asia, an area stretching from Pakistan to the Philippines and containing more than 600,000,000 people.

The Colombo Plan had its origin in a meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, which took place in Colombo in January 1950. The Governments of the countries of South and South-East Asia were faced with a number of formidable problems many of an economic character. They were making determined efforts to improve the economic condition of their people and to promote greater economic stability in their part of the world. Some assistance in this connection was being received from the United Kingdom, the United States and United Nations agencies. There was clearly a need, however, for a more co-ordinated approach to the economic problems of the area. The Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth countries which met in Colombo took the initiative in considering further international action to deal with the problem, because three quarters of the people of South and South-East Asia live in countries which are part of the Commonwealth and the whole area is one with which Commonwealth Governments have close political and economic ties. In taking this initiative, however, the Commonwealth countries contemplated that all countries in South and South-East Asia should be invited to participate on equal terms in whatever plan could be devised, and that other countries outside the area might also wish to become associated with the Plan.

The first step was the establishment of the Consultative Committee, which first met in Sydney, Australia, in May 1950. This preliminary meeting was followed by a meeting in London, in October 1950, at which the Colombo Plan was drawn up. This embraced six-year development programmes of Commonwealth countries in South and South-East Asia and assessed the economic needs and resources of the whole area. Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Thailand were represented by observers at the London meetings. The United States, which was already co-operating with countries in South and South-East Asia under provisions of what was known as the "Point Four" programme, joined the Consultative Committee as a full member in 1951. By 1952, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and Viet-Nam had also become full members, and Indonesia participated as a full member at the 1953 meetings in New Delhi. Thailand has continued to send observers to the Consultative Committee meetings and the Philippines has also been represented in this way at two of the meetings.

The Colombo Plan was framed to cover the period June 1951 to June 1957. At the annual meeting in Karachi in 1952, the first year's operations were reviewed and a further review took place at the New Delhi meeting last October. Because several additional countries have joined since the original plan was drawn up in 1950, it was possible at these later meetings to include assessments of the economic needs and development requirements of most of the countries of South and South-East Asia, and to review the progress these countries are making. Some of the countries, particularly those in which conditions are still unsettled, are faced with special problems and have therefore reached varying stages in the formulation and implementation of fully planned development programmes.

The Colombo Plan is not a single "master" plan but is made up of the various development programmes of member countries. It is based on development activities originated in and carried on by the countries of South and South-East Asia themselves; at the same time it brings them together in a co-operative association with other countries which desire to help them to help themselves. The Plan is not centrally administered; assistance is arranged bilaterally between member countries. The annual meetings of the Consultative Committee reach no collective decisions binding on members. However, the meetings enable all member countries to gain a broader perspective on current economic trends in South and South-East Asia. They also assist member countries to assess what has been accomplished and what remains to be done to achieve the objectives of the Plan. This year, as in previous years, the Consultative Committee's annual report on the Plan will be published after the meetings have been concluded.

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