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Speech by
the Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, at a dinner
in honour of His Royal Highness
Prince Saud Al Faisal Al Saud,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

OTTAWA

October 4, 1987.

Your Royal Highness, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome tonight our distinguished guest, His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal Al Saud, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, together with our friends representing both the public and the private sectors of Saudi Arabia. Having met His Royal Highness on several occasions and recalling with great pleasure my visit last year to Riyadh, I am pleased at this opportunity to meet once again, this time on Canadian soil. I understand that His Royal Highness enjoys the sport of skiing and I only wish that the season was right for introducing him to the world-class ski slopes we have prepared for the upcoming winter Olympic Games. I trust, however, that his memories of his time in Ottawa will be as pleasant as those I retain of the Kingdom.

From the Canadian side, we look forward to the next few days both as an opportunity for exchanging views on pressing issues of common concern, and as an occasion for developing stronger and mutually beneficial economic ties through the Joint Economic Committee.

During my brief visit to Saudi Arabia I found a country stark in its environment, yet blessed with the dramatic vistas of its great deserts, with the proud and independent spirit of its people, and with the presence within its borders of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Many Canadians of the Muslim faith participate in the pilgrimage to Mecca each year where they enjoy the hospitality of their hosts, the Government and people of Saudi Arabia. But Saudi Arabia is blessed as well in its statesmen of vision, courage and dedication, who will lead their country into the 21st century. At the same time these statesmen will ensure that Saudi Arabia remains true to its heritage, retaining the customs, laws and traditions of its people so as to enrich future generations.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also blessed with a range of natural resources, most notably of course, the greatest petroleum reserves in the world. These non-renewable resources have been husbanded, developed with an eye to the future of Saudi Arabia but also with due regard to their international importance, such as the needs of less fortunate nations, thus according to the Kingdom's rulers a respected place in international circles.

Yet Saudi Arabia faces external problems. For over seven years, the Gulf war between Iran and Iraq has caused incalculable suffering only a short distance from the frontiers of the Kingdom. In recent months this conflict has affected

Saudi Arabia more directly as the 'tanker war' in the Gulf escalates with a corresponding rise in regional tension. Led by His Majesty, King Fahd, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and His Royal Highness, Prince Saud, the Kingdom is to be commended for its consistently moderate and steady response to acts of deliberate provocation.

I wish to cite specifically the tragic incident that marred the recent celebration of Islam's holiest rite, the pilgrimage to Mecca. Canada deplores the loss of life in this affair and stands firm with Saudi Arabia in its denunciation of those who would use religious ceremonies for overtly political ends. Eager to see an end to the war and believing that incidents such as the one in Mecca arise from tensions generated by the Gulf war, Canada supports unreservedly the measures and steps outlined in Security Council Resolution 598. Furthermore Canada is prepared to endorse follow-up efforts of the United Nations Secretary General and Security Council, including the application of sanctions, aimed at ending this senseless and destabilizing conflict.

I also wish to raise the issue of the protracted Arab-Israeli dispute. Although our two countries might not agree on the details of an approach to a solution, it must be emphasized that both Canada and Saudi Arabia are committed to policies which would guarantee the right of all nations in the region to live at peace within secure and recognized boundaries. We also support a homeland for the Palestinians within a clearly defined territory, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We note that the Kingdom, as a voice for Arab moderation, led the way to the Fez Plan of 1982. This move marked a significant step by the Arab League towards resolution of a dispute that has plagued the Middle East for much of this century. For its part, Canada will continue to support wholeheartedly the leaders of those countries who are committed to the search for peace with honour, and who are prepared to take the risks required to achieve a just and lasting settlement.

Canada and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia share hopes and dreams on many pressing international issues particularly those concerning peace and development. We will continue to work together to make these hopes and dreams a reality. Already there is cooperation between the Canadian International Development Agency and the Saudi Fund for Development - bringing to bear the resources of both countries, together with others, for development projects which will benefit those in the Third World.

We will also work together to strengthen our economic relationship. The meeting tomorrow of the Joint Economic Committee and the tour by business leaders and government

officials from Saudi Arabia through business and industrial centres of Canada, give substance to our words of this evening. These events demonstrate that our two countries recognize each other as mature, worthy partners in the common pursuit of the well-being of our two peoples.

The visit of His Royal Highness and the meeting of the JEC mark further steps in the process of building ties between Canada and Saudi Arabia. They afford an opportunity to better our understanding of each other and to demonstrate that shared goals can be reached if we strive toward them together.

I ask you to join with me in honouring our distinguished guest, His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal Al Saud, as we look forward to years of cooperation and friendship between our two countries both bilaterally and in the international sphere.