



communiqué

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JOE CLARK REAFFIRMS CANADIAN SUPPORT FOR PEACE PROCESS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, sent, on August 4, a special message to the Central American foreign ministers, expressing Canada's hope that the meeting of Central American Presidents planned for August 6-7 in Guatemala would go forward. Mr. Clark's message, addressed to the foreign ministers of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, conveyed Canada's support for the Costa Rican peace initiative and for Latin American efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement to the crisis in Central America. The text is as follows:

"I am writing to you at a critical moment in your region's history. Central America needs peace desperately. None of the multiple problems that beset the area can be adequately addressed while there is continuing conflict. No one is more aware of this fundamental truth than the leaders of the countries of Central America, as they prepare to meet in the days ahead to attempt to achieve a solution to the crisis.

The main item on the agenda will be the peace plan proposed by President Arias of Costa Rica. In your discussion of this proposal, the Government of Canada supports your efforts to find common ground and the necessary collective political will that is required if there is to be progress. We have no illusions that an agreement will be easily reached. However, we hope that the enormity of the challenge will not dissuade you from meeting and that this initiative can serve to revitalize the process of dialogue.

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President Arias has made clear that his proposal falls within the spirit and framework of the Contadora process, which Canada has long supported as the most appropriate vehicle for a peaceful settlement in the region. We wish you success in your efforts to make progress toward this goal."

Since Mr. Clark sent this message, the United States has announced a new peace plan. Mr. Clark has noted the preliminary details of the plan and expects that the Central American summit will provide an opportunity for the Presidents of the region to discuss the plan, should they wish to do so.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING ON THE CONTADORA PROCESS

The Canadian Government is deeply concerned about the tensions in Central America and continues to express its willingness to help find solutions to the critical problems of the region. In his speech to the Inter-American Press Association last year, the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, described the Contadora initiative as "the best instrument for reconciliation in Central America". The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, has expressed Canada's strong support for the Contadora process in public statements within Canada and abroad. Mr. Clark reaffirmed this position during his visits to Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela in 1986. In a message to the Foreign Ministers of the Contadora and Lima Support Groups, and the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, on the occasion of their joint mission to Central America in January 1987, Mr. Clark stated that the efforts of the Contadora Group "have sustained the hope of the international community for a lasting solution to the crisis in Central America". As well, the Canadian delegation made a strong statement in support of Contadora at the 1986 United Nations General Assembly.

As Prime Minister Mulroney recently stated, Canada is "not in favour of exporting revolutions, any more than we approve of third party intervention anywhere in Central America, whoever the third party may be and regardless of its legitimate interests in the area. We regret the extension of East-West disagreements into the area and we do not approve of any country supplying arms to any faction in the area".

Canada has also made a practical contribution to the Contadora process. In 1985 and 1986, the Canadian Government, at the request of the Contadora governments, prepared a series of written comments on the security and control provisions of the Contadora Draft Act.

Canada welcomed the new initiative to promote a settlement of the conflicts in Central America put forward by President Arias of Costa Rica who simultaneously affirmed his country's strong support for Contadora. We are also pleased that the Presidents of the five Central American countries have agreed to meet to discuss the initiative.

Concern has been expressed about the lack of progress of the Contadora negotiations and the fact that there have been difficulties in reaching speedy agreement on a regional peace accord acceptable to all the Central American parties. While recognizing that the Contadora initiative continues to face difficulties, Canada has maintained its position that the Contadora process is the best instrument for reconciliation in Central America. We believe that it is important that the process continue, as it helps to lower tensions and provides a framework for an eventual settlement.