

Statement

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THE CONFERENCE ON STRENGTHENING CANADA-USSR RELATIONS:

"COOPERATION IN THE ARCTIC"

NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDIAN AFFAIRS AND

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT),

THE HONOURABLE KIM CAMPBELL,

FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK

OTTAWA

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Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Mr. Chairman, Ambassador and Mrs. Rodionov, Mr. Petrovsky, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark, I am very pleased to have been invited to speak to you on the first evening of this truly visionary and inspiring conference. I doubt so many experts on so many facets of such a large part of the Arctic have ever been together in one room before. May I offer both thanks and congratulations to John Lamb and his colleagues at the Canadian Centre for Arms Control and Disarmament for the initiative, imagination and industry that led to our being here tonight in such auspicious circumstances.

This is just the first day of your discussions. I originally thought, therefore, that I should try to give an appropriate "first day" tone to my remarks. You all know what that means. A "first day" tone is when the speaker begins by expressing his or her pleasure at being at the conference, but then quickly goes on to admonish the participants that they have much hard and serious work ahead of them. The speaker alludes to important developments that could result from a successful conference, but also to missed opportunities that may flow from failure. He or she expresses confidence in the participants, but the serious tone leaves no doubt that it is too early for congratulations. The remarks are positive enough to inspire the audience, but sober enough to ensure they all get to bed early.

Well, you do have hard and serious work ahead, and I do admonish you to take maximum advantage of this splendid opportunity to broaden and deepen the cooperation between the citizens of our two great countries. But I hope no one will think it inappropriately early for me to say that we already have much to celebrate. I am thinking, of course, of the foundation you have to build upon this week -- the extraordinary growth in Canadian-Soviet cooperation in the Arctic during this decade. In the past several years, Canadians and Soviets who live in, or are concerned with, the North have discovered they have moved enthusiastically to share and learn from one another. This conference is a testament to the fact that this process is just beginning. Many opportunities remain to be explored and seized. But I'm sure we can all take a moment to savour our impressive recent successes without losing any resolve to build upon them further.

Many of you are familiar with the elements of recent Canadian-Soviet cooperation in the Arctic. Perhaps the catalyst was the 1984 protocol on Arctic cooperation. In the five years since that agreement was concluded, hundreds of Canadian and Soviet scientists, public servants, educators, scholars, business people, native peoples and technical experts have met to discuss common interests and establish contacts. The protocol has proven so successful that our two countries are expected to conclude a new,

more far-reaching agreement on Arctic cooperation when Prime Minister Mulroney visits the Soviet Union next month. The Polar Ski Trek by a team of Soviet and Canadian skiers two years ago was not only a magnificent triumph of human strength and spirit, it brought home our geographical proximity and common Arctic heritage to millions of Canadian and Soviet citizens. The Arctic indigenous peoples of both countries are forging new, culturally deep links, most notably through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which hosted Inuit from all the Circumpolar countries for the first time in Greenland last summer. And what could be a more natural avenue for Canadian-Soviet cooperation than that now occurring between the Canadian Marine Transport Group and Minmorflot, the Soviet Ministry of Merchant Marine, in a multi-faceted project involving ship design, remote sensing and shipping in Arctic waters.

The Canadian Government supports all these accomplishments strongly and is proud to have assisted them in some measure. In 1987, the government adopted an official policy of promoting Circumpolar cooperation and we continue to pursue bilateral and multilateral opportunities to strengthen our Arctic-focussed relations with Circumpolar neighbours. We are working on several fronts to assist Canadians, particularly Northerners, and other Canadian governments in pursuing their interest in the international north. As Canada's largest Arctic neighbour, the Soviet Union is naturally seen by Canadians as offering numerous possibilities for mutually beneficial cooperation. We were, therefore, particularly pleased to hear President Gorbachev call for greater cooperation among the Arctic countries in his 1987 speech in Murmansk. Canada remains ready to respond to that call. I am sure Prime Minister Mulroney will be eager to explore new bilateral avenues during his visit, particularly those touching the troublesome questions of Global and Arctic environmental degradation.

This conference is emphasizing bilateral cooperation. However, I must mention the efforts of the eight Arctic countries to create an International Arctic Science Committee and to address the protection of the Arctic environment within the Finnish initiative. Canada supports both these initiatives strongly. We were particularly encouraged by the outcome of last month's meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland. There, the Arctic countries agreed upon a work programme that will lead, we hope, to collective efforts to deal with serious threats to the Arctic environment like toxic accumulations, acid rain, Arctic haze climate change and marine pollution. As with bilateral Circumpolar cooperation, Canada views efforts to expand multilateral cooperation among the Arctic countries with favour.

Canadian officials who are involved in these discussions have been struck by the equally positive approach demonstrated by their Soviet counterparts. I am told that our two countries are enjoying close, easy working relations and that we share a common course more often than we disagree. It is almost as if we "see" the same Arctic, by which I mean we share a perception of that balance between rights and responsibilities that being an Arctic country entails. Furthermore, both countries are promoting enhanced international cooperation in the Arctic in order to address some very real, down to earth problems rather than because of an attraction to abstract geopolitical ideals. It is this pragmatic "people-to-people" quality of our cooperation that is giving such a solid foundation to our efforts, and so may benefits to our peoples.

Where does this newly-flourishing spirit come from? I believe Canadians and Soviets have a uniquely common perception of the Arctic and its place within our respective national fabrics. For us, the Arctic is not just a remote region of primarily scientific interest, like Antarctica, although Arctic science is extremely important. Likewise, the Arctic is not just a source of resources, although Arctic resources are an important source of national wealth. In fact, for Canada and the Soviet Union, the Arctic is not just any one thing at all. For both of us, the Arctic is a fully-fledged national region with all the human, economic, ecological, cultural and strategic complexities of any other, and a fair number of distinctive ones to boot. Our Arctics are not only geographically huge, they have a depth and importance that our peoples celebrate and our governments find challenging. No better proof of this can be found than the agenda of this conference. I can think of no two other countries that would give national importance to such a broad range of Arctic issues.

We in Canada have come to see the Arctic more and more in human terms, which is why we place such an emphasis on the participation of Northern Territorial governments and Northern indigenous peoples in Circumpolar cooperation. Perhaps this is partly because it was the Inuit themselves who inspired us when they initiated what might be called the modern era of Circumpolar cooperation roughly a decade ago. It was they who taught many Southern Canadians that the Arctic is rich and varied, and that Canadian pride in the Arctic carries with it the responsibility to respect the Arctic ecology and to deliver justice to the Arctic peoples. The efforts of the Canadian Inuit and other Northern Canadians to develop bonds in other Arctic regions, and to defend their traditional ways of life when challenged within the international community, have the firm support of the Canadian government.

It is also through this emphasis on the human side of the Arctic that the government has come to put a priority on the state of the Arctic environment. Problems like climate change, Arctic haze, ozone depletion and toxic accumulation are not unique to the Arctic, but there is growing evidence that they may be affecting the Arctic more severely than other regions. None of these problems can be addressed adequately by national means alone -- they are international concerns that demand the cooperation of many Arctic and non-Arctic countries. But a brief glance at the map shows the key role Canada and the Soviet Union must play in any international efforts to protect the Arctic from ecological damage. It is we who must show leadership. It is we who must work together closely just to get the rest of the world to take proper notice. I truly hope this conference will discover new, imaginative ways in which our two countries can cooperate both to understand and to cope with these troubling and alarming challenges.

Canada is concerned about all environmental threats to the Arctic. But I would like to take a moment to highlight the issue of toxic accumulations in the Arctic food chain. Governments are sometimes accused by the cynical of adopting a posture of alarm for reasons of image, or to increase their popularity. Let me assure you all of the very real consternation and concern the Canadian government feels about the disturbingly high incidences of PCB's and other organic compounds in the blood of native children and the milk of native mothers in the Arctic. Recent studies show an average consumption of more than the recommended tolerable limits of organic contaminants daily in some communities. We know the sources of some of these contaminants are international, but we know little else at this time. We are determined to understand this problem better and to find some way of reassuring our obviously distressed Northern native peoples, but we require help. This is one of the reasons we supported the Finnish initiative from the outset. We hope our friends in the Soviet Union will help us to comprehend and address this problem better, just as we stand ready to respond to comparable requests from them.

I would like now to say a few words about the question of arms control and other strategic issues. We are pleased that Canadians and Soviets concerned about international tensions are meeting to consider the strategic significance of the Arctic and its relationship to world peace. But I must tell you that Canada sees a limited scope for isolating these matters in an Arctic or any other regional context, especially at the time when the prospect of progress in global fora seems so promising. For just as Arctic experts are fond of reminding us how a mercator projection distorts the Arctic and conceals many Circumpolar unities, so we must not forget how a Circumpolar projection

distorts the rest of the world. Whatever threats the Arctic may face from nuclear weapons, naval warfare or whatever, these threaten the rest of the world as well. Canada's strong desire for peace in the Arctic does not imply a willingness to accept war elsewhere. While there may indeed be merit in discussing specific measures for the Arctic, we believe it would be illogical and even potentially destabilizing to consider these in any other than the global East/West context.

The Canadian government is committed to peace and security in the Arctic in the way it is committed to global peace and security. Our aversion to the militarization of the Arctic is evidenced by the very small -- less than 0.1% of total defence expenditures -- purely defensive military presence we maintain in the Arctic. In our view, the best way to ensure peace and security in the Arctic is to lend full support to the East/West negotiations on arms control. These are now offering us hope for significant reductions of nuclear and conventional weapons and reduced tension in many areas of the world, including the Arctic.

In modern times we have come to recognize peace as more than an absence of war. Canada believes that broadly based circumpolar cooperation in the Arctic can go a long way towards establishing a sense of mutual interest, dependence and trust in that region. Of course, we see circumpolar cooperation as an important element in the development of the Canadian north and its peoples, but it is more than that. Strategic sensitivities in the region developed at least partly because of our traditional perceptions of the Arctic as remote, forbidding and empty. The current rapid growth of cooperation between Circumpolar governments and peoples, of which this conference is an important part, can, we believe, go a long way towards breaking down those outmoded perceptions and make both the Arctic and the world a safer place.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to impress upon our Soviet guests just how enthusiastic Canadians are about increased Soviet-Canadian cooperation in the Arctic. The support for expanding this major component of our bilateral relationship goes far beyond this room. In fact, I know of no one who has any hesitation in applauding our recent successes and calling for more. I am aware that Canadian-Soviet cooperation did not just start yesterday. Our scientists have long worked together. Soviet support for Canada was crucial to our success in including special protections for ice-covered waters in the Law of The Sea Treaty. The Arctic-Rim countries have cooperated successfully to save the polar bear from possible extinction. But what we are now seeing is a new breadth and tone to our cooperation that is catching the enthusiasm of Canadians from sea to sea to sea. May this conference take this spirit and mould it into new concrete opportunities for our peoples to work together. To our Soviet guests, we thank you for joining

Canada in the pursuit of greater international cooperation in the Arctic. The exciting changes now taking place in your country have captured the admiration and imagination of all Canadians, and we wish you well. Because of these changes, you have opened your north to Canadians, invited our help and offered your assistance, as we have to you. We in Canada like what we see very much, and we trust you do too. That is why I now invite you to rise and join me in a toast to the future of Canadian-Soviet cooperation in the Arctic.