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APRIL 29, 1975

STATEMENT DISCOURS



STATEMENT BY THE
SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
THE HONOURABLE ALLAN J. MACEachEN,
AT ACCRA
ON APRIL 24, 1975

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I have long been anxious to visit Africa. I considered it an essential part of my new duties to do so as soon as feasible after assuming my present portfolio in August last year. Africa is today a focal point of creative change and a major area of Canadian concern. At this time, I have been able to pay only a brief visit to West Africa but my stay in Ghana is naturally a highlight of this short tour of five important African states.

We, in Canada, are well aware that Ghana was the pioneer and crucible of decolonization, independence and unity in Africa, a political, economic and cultural process which is entering its culminating phase. We know what an effective contribution Ghana is now making in the achievement of closer ties among West African states. Your important role in the creation of the convention of Lome between the ACP (African-Caribbean-Pacific) and the EEC (European Economic Community) was underlined when the final and crucial meeting of ACP Ministers took place in Accra. It is not surprising that a very able Ghanaian has for a long and creative period been the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

There are also strong bilateral reasons for my visit here. Canada has had diplomatic relations and, more important, close and friendly ties with Ghana for longer than with nearly all African states. Our bilateral relations have developed in many fields of mutual concern. We have consulted and cooperated closely on a variety of important foreign policy questions. Official and personal visits and exchanges between our two countries have been a warm and many-phased feature of our relations since before your independence in 1957.

Economic development has been a strong theme in our relationship. We have been very pleased to collaborate with you in a number of successful projects. In accordance with your wise and vigorous policy of self-reliance these cooperative ventures have, of course, been based on your national priorities and your desire to strengthen the economic sinews for self-sustaining growth. We are pleased that our own slight contribution to your strenuous economic development programme has had such creative results in a variety of fields from power to water to transport to education, food and communications. We have been much impressed by the achievements to date of Operation Feed Yourself and hope very much to find further ways for cooperation in the development of Ghana's abundant agricultural potential.

We know how crucially important to your economy the next few years will be in the furtherance of your economic goals as outlined in the five-year development plan guidelines. We

know too the severe burden laid on your economy by quadrupled oil costs just when your economic growth was starting to surge forward. We pledge, therefore, to sustain and increase our development cooperation with Ghana in this highly important plan period. Development is, of course, buttressed and intertwined with trade, both domestic and international. In accordance with your philosophy of self-reliance, we would be delighted if mutually profitable trade between our two countries could be expanded as a contribution to the development of both our countries. I am pleased to have the opportunity to explore promising new avenues for trade with your government during my stay here. Three trade delegations from the province of Ontario in Canada have visited Ghana in the last year. Ghanaian trade officials will be visiting Canada in the months to come.

Our relations in the cultural field have been fairly limited to date. We, in Canada are, however, becoming increasingly attracted by the rich and varied heritage of Africa. Canadians of African origin may be participating in the Black Arts Festival in Lagos. I hope that my visit here will lead to an increase in cultural exchanges and interest between our two countries. In the field of sport, for which Ghana is well known, we look forward to an enthusiastic Ghanaian participation in the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal.

The usefulness and creative potential of the warm friendship between our two countries is not confined to our bilateral relations. In an expanding variety of international organizations, our representatives have worked harmoniously together, often helping to bridge divergent viewpoints for the benefit of wise compromise decisions. As an original member of the Commonwealth, we were delighted to welcome Ghana in 1957. We have both been enthusiastic supporters of this very useful multinational forum embracing countries of every race and continent who share similar ideals and a common working language. Ghana and Canada have helped turn this forum and club into a workshop, a workshop of professional, vocational and technical cooperation with a multitude of institutions and meetings through which skills and ideas are fruitfully exchanged. In this expanding dimension the Commonwealth Secretariat has played a central role. It was Ghana who first suggested the idea of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 and its first Secretary-General, who will soon be completing his ten creative years of office, is a Canadian. His first Deputy Secretary-General was a distinguished son of Ghana and of Africa. It was appropriate that Canada and Ghana were both represented in a small committee of very senior commonwealth officials who recently reviewed secretariat activities. These are examples of our effective collaboration within the commonwealth which will have one of its periodic and very fruitful Summit Meetings in Jamaica this month.

In the UN, Canada and Ghana have both been strong supporters of the peacekeeping concept and operations. Our support has been not simply oratorical or financial. We have both contributed large numbers of our men to UN forces and observer groups which have carried out this delicate and difficult but essential work. Unfortunately, a number of our servicemen have lost their lives in this front-line work for international peace. We are naturally peace-seeking as well as peacekeeping nations. We both try -- and succeed -- to play active and constructive roles larger than our populations and strength would indicate in the laborious, intricate and endless task of regulating the conflicts and harmonizing the divergent interests of sovereign states.

Mr. Commissioner, you have referred to the situation in which the people of Ghana find themselves with respect to the present world economic system. You have stated that for your country's developmental efforts to have maximum effect, you need a world economic order which enshrines equity as its most essential underlying element.

Canada and most other countries, including particularly, the developing countries, find themselves beset by problems of monetary instability, inflation, high food prices and sharply increased energy costs. All these factors have severe implications for balance of payments positions and consequently for the ability of countries to manage their own economies. Moreover, in a world which is clearly becoming increasingly interdependent, it would be unrealistic to assume that economic and social conditions (be they good or bad) in one country or region would not affect the economic and social health of other parts of our globe.

Ghana and other developing countries are important to Canada as partners in an interdependent society and economy. Thus, as the International Trade and Payments System undergoes changes, Canada recognizes the need to explore what additional measures are appropriate to ensure that developing countries are able to derive further benefits from international trade, investment and finance. Such measures, in Canada's view, can best be achieved through cooperative efforts in which the real interests of all countries are addressed. Indeed, there is no more urgent development issue than the maintenance of world economic vigour, for when production and demand falter, all countries -- developed and developing -- are bound to suffer.

Canadians are pleased to witness the rapid shrinking of the area controlled by racialism and colonialism in Africa. We have hailed the historic decision of the new Portuguese authorities to grant full independence to all their colonies in Africa. We have embarked upon diplomatic relations with Guinea-Bissau, and we are sending, in the next few weeks, a special mission to Angola and Mozambique to lay the ground for good relations with these countries, as well as the smaller Portuguese territories of Africa, which will stand as free and sovereign members of the United Nations and the OAU (Organization of African Unity).

There have been some signs of progress as well in Rhodesia and Namibia, but the prospects are not clear and we are following developments closely indeed. It is not up to us to predetermine the terms of any eventual settlement in Rhodesia or Namibia. There is no doubt, however, that the world cannot accept any settlement not ratified by a solid majority of the population of these territories. We are hopeful that the day will soon come when the colonialist and racist regimes will understand that a new order of things has to be ushered in before all the peoples of Southern Africa can live in peace, prosperity and security.

Ghana and Canada are divided by thousands of miles with sharply different climates and economies. In the tradition of after-dinner orators, I should not fail to note that we are united by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. I am inclined to think, however, that the width of this mutual sea is so vast that one must regard it as, at best, a tenuous tie. I think we must recognize that Canada and Ghana are very different and very wide apart geographically. Our friendship, personal ties and very effective cooperation must therefore be regarded as striking proof that ideas and ideals unite more than distance can separate. We are in different spheres and hemispheres but not on different wave-lengths. Our economic and political cooperation transcend and dwarf the daunting distance between us. I am confident that this phenomenon will remain a solid fact of international life for very many years to come.