

Statement

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ASEAN POST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

AT THE

SIX PLUS SIX MEETING

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

July 6, 1989.

Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Your Royal Highness, honourable Ministers, friends and colleagues.

Thank you, Your Highness, for your warm words of welcome. It is a great pleasure to be in Brunei Darussalam to join you, your ASEAN colleagues and other dialogue partners.

This is the fifth Post Ministerial Conference in which I have had the privilege of participating personally. I have been here almost as long as Marshall Siddhi, and you yourself, Your Highness. To Canada, ASEAN is an invaluable instrument of economic development and regional security.

Canada has been involved in Asia since before our own Confederation, more than twelve decades ago. As a former colony ourselves, we were active in assisting many ASEAN nations make the difficult and exhilarating transition to independence. Through the Commonwealth, we helped devise the Colombo Plan in the late 1940s, perhaps the first great multilateral cooperation effort of the modern era.

From 1954 to 1973, in Indochina we participated in the international supervisory and control commissions, and learned lessons applicable today, as we face a new opportunity to achieve a durable and comprehensive political situation in Indochina.

Marshall Siddhi will recall that, in 1979 in Geneva, at the first Indochinese Refugee Conference, Canada was the first country to pledge to resettle refugees. We continue in that course. At the Conference last month in Geneva, so ably chaired by Dato Abu Hassan, the Honourable Barbara MacDougall pledged Canada to resettle a minimum of 16,000 longstayers over the next three years. To date, over 125,000 Vietnamese refugees have found homes in Canada.

Canada's relations across the Pacific have multiplied many fold since the days of the Colombo Plan. Asia Pacific is now Canada's largest trading partner after the United States: 50% of Canada's non-U.S. trade is with the nations of this dynamic region. Asia Pacific is Canada's largest source of new Canadians, providing fully 50% of our new immigrants. I recently presented a report to Parliament on Canada's relations with Asia. The inescapable conclusion, from my inquiries among Canadians, is that Canada's Pacific identity is thriving and expanding.

Your Highness, ASEAN has time and again demonstrated the value of consultation and collective action in pursuit of common objectives. The PMC discussions have made a strong contribution to improved understanding and the advancement of the goals which we all seek as open, tolerant societies committed to prosperity and peace.

Canada is a strong believer in the merits of collective action, one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations charter. Multilateralism is the foundation of Canada's foreign policy. We are convinced that Canada's influence and independence are best protected and advanced by seeking common cause with others.

Therefore, we welcome proposals which have as their goal greater co-operation among nations of the Pacific. We need not look too far into history to see examples of periods of prosperity that fall into decline because of complacency and a lack of vision as to how to carry forward into the future systems that generate wealth and peace today.

Canada believes that the time is right to build upon the success of this forum, and others like it to widen the areas where the nations around this table and others with similar views and values, can consolidate the gains of the past and plan for a more prosperous future. I look forward to our discussion in the next two days on this timely issue.

Your Highness, we need not look far to see evidence of the threats to stability in this region. I am encouraged by recent developments in Cambodia and the momentum building for peace. We strongly support the efforts of Prince Sihanouk to achieve a lasting reconciliation among the Cambodian people. ASEAN's efforts, especially the JIM process carried forward by His Excellency Ali Alatas, will continue to be critical to success.

With Cambodia high on our agenda and developments in the past year offering the prospect for a settlement, recent events in China cast a sobering shadow in the region. Canadians reacted with shock and outrage to the Tiananmen Massacre and the subsequent campaign of repression. We consulted widely at home and with others on a response to the new and changing political reality in China. Last Friday, I announced a series of measures that rejected the Chinese authorities' call for business-as-usual but more importantly that aimed to preserve the links with China forged by the Canadian Government, industry and academics over the past decade, to emphasize people-to-people exchanges and to encourage China to the open door in economic development and moderation in its domestic policies.

I expect that the Paris Economic Summit, like the previous Economic Summit in Toronto, will be successful and productive. Its main theme will be the reduction of fiscal and trade deficits in order to maintain global non-inflationary growth. Other important themes will include debt, trade - especially agriculture products - and the environment.

On the debt issue, much work remains to be done but there has been substantial progress in discussions in the IMF and World Bank, based on broad endorsement of the Brady proposals. There is now broad agreement on the guidelines for IMF financing in support of debt reduction operations.

More recent discussion has focussed on the commercial bank debt of middle income countries, and the official debt of the poorest countries. Some means of relief must be found that is acceptable to all, and is manageable by the most heavily indebted. The statement on debt at the Paris Summit will interest all of us, and I would welcome your observations on the eve of that meeting.

The Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations has moved to its detailed negotiating phase. The positive outcome of the April Trade Negotiations Committee has provided a comprehensive negotiating framework and agreed timetable for each of the issues on the MTN Agenda.

However, the difficulties encountered in concluding the Mid-Term Review initiated at the Montreal Ministerial Meeting, particularly on agriculture, demonstrate that sustained political commitment and private sector support will be essential for the successful completion of the Round by the end of 1990.

The progress thus far achieved in the Round is consistent with Canadian priorities which I know are shared for the most part by our ASEAN and dialogue partners. These include reform of trade in agriculture, improved market access, strengthening of GATT Rules, a more effective dispute settlement mechanism, and a more liberal environment for trade in services. We must continue to lend strong and active support towards a positive outcome in these priority areas.

The Toronto Summit made a strong statement on the environment and that subject will have an important place at Paris too. The community of nations faces a crucial challenge to ensure that our economic activities do not so disrupt the environment as to put the world at risk. The problem is complex, particularly in developing countries, and requires genuine cooperation and political will.

Your Highness, these are all important issues which I look forward to discussing in the coming two days. I am quite sure, that as we have found in the past, we will share many views. And should we have differences in some areas this will contribute to our understanding and knowledge of each other. I find, as I am sure you do, that these annual exchanges are invaluable in providing a basis and an inspiration to act together.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.