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STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

Notes for a speech
by the Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
at the opening plenaries
of the Vienna follow-up meeting
of the Conference on Security
and Cooperation in Europe

Canada

VIENNA, AUSTRIA
November 5, 1986

Mr. Chairman,

May I first join with my colleagues in expressing gratitude for the hospitality shown to us by the Foreign Minister of Austria and by his Government and people, and for the efficient and tireless work of Dr. Liedermann and his Executive Secretariat. This elegant city, and these beautiful buildings, have over the centuries witnessed many events of vital importance to the history of Europe, as well as countless manifestations of its finest cultural and intellectual achievements. As a representative of a young country, I find so much tangible evidence of history and achievement at once humbling and inspiring. But our presence here today is also an expression of the resilience, the continuity, and the dynamism of Europe.

This brilliant European civilization has, more than any other, provided the ideas and inspiration that have shaped our modern world. Much of Europe's recent achievement derives from its ability to move gradually from blind subservience, whether political or intellectual, toward freedom and tolerance. Many countries that share this tradition, including our own, have developed political systems based on the rule of law, under popular control, responsive to fundamental human needs for freedom, dignity, and social justice, and open to a wide variety of ideas.

Canada is an ocean away from Europe, but bound to you by both tradition and destiny.

In the event of a nuclear exchange, our capital city would be 30 minutes away from destruction by a modern ICBM. Canadian land and lives lie directly below the path of any polar strike between the superpowers. We are the second largest country in the world, with nearly 10 million square kilometers, and all that would be a battle ground if the catastrophe we are seeking to prevent in fact occurred.

Nearly five thousand Canadian troops are stationed permanently in Europe, and their numbers are increasing. Thousands of their predecessors fought in world wars here, and of those, thousands lie buried beneath the stark crosses of soldiers' graves in Flanders and Dieppe, at Klagenfurt and Salerno, and at Vimy Ridge.

We trade with every nation here. We draw upon your culture and your history and your art, and increasingly, enrich yours with our own. As a strong nation in a young continent, our Canadian people come from everywhere, but particularly from Europe. One in seven Canadians has family origins in Eastern Europe - and for those millions of Canadians, questions of human rights, of the right to move freely, of the reunification of families, are intensely personal questions, which affect not statistics, but uncles and aunts and sisters and mothers and brothers and fathers and children.

The human web between Canada and Europe is pervasive. Of my colleagues in the Canadian Cabinet, one was born in Czechoslovakia, one in Germany, another is the grandson of Russian émigrés. Danylo Shumuk, a prisoner until February in Soviet confinement, is awaited by his relatives in the province of British Columbia. Europeans, who left their homelands in hope or flight, have built the solid basis of schools and businesses and communities from our Atlantic to our Pacific, and to our Arctic oceans. Every language spoken in every country represented here is also spoken in Canada. When the earth trembles near Naples, disaster strikes at Chernobyl, a mountain slides in Sicily, or a terrorist bomb explodes anywhere in Europe, Canadians are involved directly, personally. And the issues which divide Europe are our issues - our values, our safety, our families, in both the generic and the particular sense.

It is therefore clear to us that Europe, and the world, can only be a safe place when tensions and conflicts are managed, when the will exists to address fundamental problems and promote practical solutions. Canada has therefore worked for years to establish a significant role in arms control forums. We contributed to the concept of the peacekeeping force, and Canadian troops have served in that capacity in Asia, in Africa, in the Mediterranean and throughout the Middle East. We defend the United Nations. We seek to reduce the causes and restrain the course of regional conflicts. We believe the pursuit of peace cannot be the exclusive preserve of the superpowers. If we are to move to a more cooperative and less confrontational relationship, all of us must do all we can to stimulate dialogue, pursue contacts, and promote cooperation between all countries and at all levels. Without surrendering our deeply held convictions, we must exercise restraint and encourage mutual recognition of each other's legitimate needs and interests.

Mr. Chairman, we are here at an uncertain time in East-West relations. In recent weeks, the superpowers came tantalizingly close to a framework for major reductions in nuclear arsenals, only to be held back by the complexity of the issues facing them. We have seen certain CSCE signatories release some longtime dissidents and political prisoners, only, in some cases, to practice renewed repression against others. It is difficult to tell whether the omens are good or bad, whether we stand on the threshold of dramatic progress or renewed disenchantment.

A curiosity of these times is that we do not lack for leadership. There was leadership, on both sides, at Reykjavik. There was leadership by a wider cast, at Stockholm. What restrains that leadership is the deep legacy of suspicion. What is demanded of us, now more than ever, is the practical construction of confidence and trust.

Confidence-building is the essence of the CSCE process. It is the central theme of all three baskets of the Helsinki Final Act. In the CSCE all but one of the countries of Europe, as well as the two North American countries whose destiny is inextricably linked with that continent, can consider all the important, interrelated issues involved in political confidence-building between East and West. The CSCE has had its frustrations and failures, but despite this, it has performed a vital role in keeping alive a candid dialogue among many countries, including those who are neutral or non-aligned, that might otherwise have been impossible. Canada is wholly committed to the CSCE process. We want to see this Follow-up Meeting achieve substantial progress.

In order to achieve progress, however, we will have to come to grips with a significant problem affecting confidence. Simply put, that problem is that confidence requires compliance. Some countries represented here today have failed signally to implement many of the commitments they undertook at Helsinki and Madrid, and indeed in some cases there has been backsliding since 1975. An important opportunity has thus been lost to strengthen security and cooperation in Europe. Even worse, by failing to implement commitments they made at the highest political level, these countries have contributed not to the building, but to the erosion, of confidence in the CSCE process and, to a great extent, to an erosion of our confidence in their willingness to honour commitments in other areas.

Some participating countries have rewarded with imprisonment, exile, and other forms of punishment, people whose only real crime seems to have been to have believed that we all meant what we said in 1975 when we pledged - and I quote from the Final Act - to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, and when we further undertook to "confirm the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field". In some countries, thousands of people remain prevented by national policy or bureaucratic obduracy from having regular contact with members of their families in other countries, regular access to culture and information from outside, or, should they choose to do so, the opportunity to leave their country. And we cannot forget that one participating state has, over the past seven years, violated virtually all of the principles guiding relations between states by its continuing military intervention in Afghanistan.

For Vienna to be a step toward restoring confidence, and not accelerating its decline, we need to receive - and may I say, Mr. Chairman, we hope to receive - positive signs from these countries that, henceforward, the trend lines in observing these and other commitments, shall be steadily and visibly upward; and that real steps will be taken to honour them. For many Canadians, progress at Vienna, and their confidence in the CSCE process, will be primarily measured by the degree to which the contradiction between the actions of these countries, and their professed desire for détente, can be reconciled.

Progress in this area would be significant, and perhaps sufficient for us to regard Vienna as a success. But we would like, if possible, to go further, and to build on enhanced implementation by balanced progress in all areas covered by the Final Act.

We are very satisfied with the successful outcome of the Stockholm Conference. It is an important development in East-West relations and an event of considerable political and military significance for Europe. The agreed set of confidence-building measures represent a substantial improvement over that in the Helsinki Final Act. We are pleased to be able to say that we did our best to participate fully and constructively in facilitating the formation and adoption of the Stockholm Document. Our very ability to reach agreement inspires confidence.

As we approach discussions on further steps, we will watch closely the practical operation of these confidence-building measures. Mr. Chairman, for many years Canada has worked with others to achieve balanced and verifiable arms reductions in order to create a stable balance of conventional forces in Europe, and we hope that further progress can be made. In considering any proposals that might supersede existing arms control discussions, we will want to ensure that they offer greater chances of success, and are not merely old wine in new bottles. Progress in existing forums such as MBFR, especially in the vital area of verification, would build confidence too.

In Basket II, Canada as a trading nation has an interest in the increased commercial and industrial cooperation that might be possible if the measures in the Final Act dealing with statistical and other information, business contacts including access to end users, and liberalization of trade and industrial cooperation, could be implemented and improved upon. In science and technology, more direct contacts among scientists and better access to publications, research, and information, would benefit us all. In problems of the environment, greater openness and cooperation to solve common problems, both local and continent-wide, would build confidence.

The Final Act broke new ground by incorporating, as an integral part of security and cooperation in Europe, the "human dimension" - an idea that runs through the document like a thread. It establishes that people, as well as their governments, have a vital role to play in creating international stability and confidence, and that the freer flow of people, ideas, and information is an indispensable element in all facets of European security and cooperation. Canada took a leading role at Geneva in developing the human contacts sections of Basket III. We were pleased to host the Ottawa Meeting of Experts on Human Rights, which made a real contribution to dialogue on Principle VII and related issues.

We are therefore keenly disappointed that the Experts Meetings on Human Rights and on Human Contacts, and the Cultural Forum, made no apparent progress either in elaborating on our commitments in the Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document, or in encouraging their implementation. At Ottawa and Budapest, it appeared to us that some countries did not come to discuss these matters seriously, but to prevent serious discussion. At Berne, these countries made such minimal concessions that, even

if a concluding document had been adopted, there would still have been a great deal of unfinished business. Canada will do everything in its power to improve this record here. We must all recognize, Mr. Chairman, that these issues will not go away. It is not a matter of our imposing our own ideas and values on anyone, or of stressing one element of the CSCE at the expense of others. It is a simple recognition of the fact that the Final Act is indivisible, and that confidence depends on making progress in all aspects.

Mr. Chairman, I have had occasion to speak frankly today on issues my country considers of prime importance in building confidence. But my message is one of hope. The problems are real; they cannot be wished away. But if they are faced squarely and discussed in a constructive fashion, and if recent indications from certain countries that they might be prepared to make substantial changes in their approach to key areas of the Final Act are borne out in practice, then real progress is indeed possible.

Progress can be finally measured only in deeds, not in words. But even modest improvements in implementing the Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document would profoundly affect the lives of millions of Europeans and North Americans. A climate of confidence could be created in which bolder steps would be possible in all areas covered by the Final Act, as well as in other areas such as nuclear disarmament, superpower dialogue, and broader and deeper relations among all participating States.

The issue is confidence, and the challenge is before us. If we shun the heat and dust, we cannot win the prize. But if we keep our courage, goodwill, and above all our patience, we may yet achieve real gains that would make us worthy successors not only of the political, but of the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual giants of Europe who have walked here in generations gone by.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.