



STATEMENT

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT THE MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL OF THE OECD
"THE OECD IN AN EVOLVING WORLD"

PARIS, France
June 8, 1994

This discussion today enables me, on behalf of Canada, to describe our vision of the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development]. Above all, the Organization provides a unique forum for serious and enlightened dialogue, exchanges, and co-operation on a wide range of policy issues. These consultations among countries of a comparable level of economic development from the three main economic areas of the world are supported by a highly professional secretariat, and are without the pressures and constraints of formal negotiations. I would also say that the OECD's work can also be very useful in helping us gain domestic support or acceptance for difficult policy decisions.

There is no shortage of challenges. It is important that the OECD focuses its work on the key policy priorities of its members, in particular job creation and international trade.

The reality of this rapidly evolving world is that many of the most significant economic developments affecting our economies take place outside the OECD area. We need to increase our understanding of how these developments affect us and we need to support the integration of all countries into an open, liberal multilateral trade and economic system.

We have been grappling with this challenge for several years now. Can we, as members, articulate a more coherent approach? I think so.

An important cornerstone for such an approach is to maintain openness to new members. We warmly welcome the presence of Mexico who accomplished a great deal on its road to membership. I am confident that our organization will benefit from the presence of this new member. Moreover, I am happy to support Minister Tello's earlier proposal that the Organization undertake a study on the future and the methods of international economic co-operation.

Indeed, we are faced with a new world context. Market-oriented economies have increased in number and importance. Some of these countries want to become more involved with the OECD and others aspire to membership. Still others look to the OECD for help in transforming their economies.

The OECD must respond to these changes. The organization must cultivate a more global perspective, broaden its horizons, sharpen the focus of its activities, and keep at the forefront of issues.

Canada is favourable to the consideration of individual membership applications from countries that have made the necessary economic and political transition and are willing and able to assume the obligations and responsibilities associated with membership. On this basis, we encourage the Organization to engage in individual discussions on possible membership with the

four Partners in transition. We also recognize the active involvement of Korea in OECD activities which will pave its way toward membership in the near future.

Membership, however, is not the only means of action. The OECD's value to us, its members, is also enhanced by non-member participation in the work of our subsidiary bodies. When a country is a major player in a given sector, we can both learn from working together. This contributes to broader international co-operation.

Another element of the OECD's response to this evolving world is its co-operation with economies in transition. Progress varies for each of these countries and our manner of dealing with each should also vary. We should develop more flexible, responsive approaches to adapt to each situation. Canada supports the Japanese proposal to extend the list of countries that might be accommodated within the program of the Centre for Co-operation with Economies in Transition.

The declaration of co-operation with Russia, which we will be signing later today, underscores the OECD's distinct role. The Organization's efforts should support and complement those of other international financial institutions.

Dialogue is another vehicle used by the OECD to follow developments in the economies of non-members and to influence the evolution of their economic policies. But dialogue is not an end in itself. The OECD's dialogue should be targeted at countries most likely to influence our economies and should be focussed on our priorities, based on a review of our experience to date and our assessment of our future interests.

Our ad hoc approach to change may have produced acceptable results in the past, however, the pace of change and the need for the OECD to develop a global perspective calls for a more considered and coherent approach to our dealings with non-members. I propose that we task the Organization, with the active participation of capitals, to develop such an approach and to report back to us at next year's ministerial meeting.