



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA REMINDS THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF ITS SOUTHEAST ASIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

A Statement by Ambassador W.H. Barton, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, in the Security Council, New York, February 24, 1979.

It is a measure of Canada's deep concern over the current situation in Southeast Asia that we joined with Australia and New Zealand in what for us was an unusual step — namely, that of supporting, in a letter addressed to the President on February 23, the request for an urgent meeting of the Security Council. That we have also now sought to address the Council is again indicative of the importance Canada attaches to this debate. While Canada is neither a party to the many-sided disputes now disrupting the peace in Southeast Asia nor an immediate geographical neighbour, we regard ourselves as a member of the Pacific Community and Canadians are deeply troubled by the far-reaching consequences that the perpetuation of the present conflicts could bring about. We are concerned too, because of our 20-year exposure, as members of supervisory and control mechanisms authorized by the international community, for the aspirations of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia for justice. After a quarter of a century of strife, those aspirations have still not been fulfilled. And, finally, we are disturbed by the evident failure of existing international machinery to prevent the recurrence of violence and warfare.

I do not wish to rehearse in any detail the causes of the current confrontation, some of which are centuries old, others of more recent vintage, but all well known to the members of the Council. What is more important, and what made it imperative for the Security Council to meet, is that the Charter of the United Nations, in its very first article, declares, as one of its main purposes, the duty: "To bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace".

The Charter also makes clear that it is the Security Council that bears the primary responsibility in this regard. It is, therefore, the duty of this Council not only to review the facts of the present crisis but — what is more important — to consider practical measures that can help to defuse the situation and, in time, restore peace in that long-afflicted region. The facts are well known. The military movements across international borders and the continued armed confrontations between large forces are not denied. The resulting human suffering and economic losses are self-evident.

My country deploras the increasing resort to the use of force that we have been witnessing in the attempt to settle disputes in Southeast Asia, and we call here, as we have publicly and through diplomatic channels, for the exercise of restraint on the part of all those involved.

Beyond that, it should be evident that the first essential step to be taken by the

Council must be an immediate cessation of hostilities in the entire region. Secondly, this must be followed as rapidly as possible by the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the territory of Cambodia and from the territory of Vietnam. And, thirdly, it is equally clear to my Government that we must move the treatment of these differences from the military to the political level. In other words, it is our earnest hope that the Council may be able to proceed beyond the essential first steps of a military cease-fire and withdrawal to a consideration of practical ways and means of developing, in an orderly fashion, a climate conducive to peace, security and stability not only for the nations directly involved in the conflict but also for their neighbours and the world at large.

But it would be a serious mistake to concentrate only on the current outbursts of violence and ignore the other ills that have plagued this region for so long. Canada has raised its voice before to deplore the denial of human rights in parts of that region. Canada, like many other nations, and in particular the countries neighbouring that region, has been shocked by the continuing exodus of thousands of refugees who have been forced for a variety of reasons to flee their homelands. We have tried, and are continuing to try, to alleviate this problem. But more sweeping measures must be taken if we want to stop violence, prevent the denial of human dignity, and alleviate the conditions that have driven human beings to join the flow of refugees. The peoples and governments of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos must be given more than sympathy or remonstrance. They must be helped to develop the political framework within which they will be able to live in peace and security. The peoples of the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) must be given more than *ad hoc* humanitarian assistance and vague reassurances. They are entitled to long-term stability and the international community would be well advised to help them to achieve it.

In Canada's view, therefore, the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole must urgently consider what modalities might best be established to achieve these long-term objectives. We know of past efforts to bring peace to the area. We also know of past failures, and we should be the last to underestimate the difficulties that will lie in the path of such a conciliation endeavour. But this effort must nevertheless be undertaken and, with will and determination, the countries directly involved, the neighbouring nations directly affected and other interested powers should be able to assemble in an appropriate fashion in order to create conditions of peace and security for the entire region. In our view, the Secretary-General is well placed to play a useful role in this process, and we urge the parties to take advantage of his offer to assist.

Against the background of what I have said already, we entertain the hope that the Security Council may invite the Secretary-General informally to explore possibilities that may be open and acceptable to those most directly involved for a political meeting that would aim at translating into mutually-acceptable political realities the issues of contention that are today the basis of unacceptable military action, which must come to an end.