



Statements and Speeches

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GROWING CANADA-ASEAN RELATIONS

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs*, to the Joint International Conference of the Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, June 21, 1982

...This conference marks an important milestone for Canada in the further growth and enhancement of its links with Southeast Asia. The Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies has an active and distinguished record, now in its thirteenth year, in fostering and encouraging Southeast Asian studies in Canada. This meeting marks the first major Canadian conference of its kind to be organized as a collaborative effort in an Asian locale. Such an event can only be viewed as an important indicator that relations between Canada and Southeast Asia have come of age.

Southeast Asia has been, for thousands of years, a crossroad between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. It is a region where the great religions of the world have converged. Its fabled trade in spices and other resources was the object of centuries of colonial rivalry. Its natural resources and strategic position in more recent times have brought to the region the attention and involvement of the super-powers of the twentieth century. It remains today the scene of great power rivalry and engages the interest of China, the USSR, the USA and Japan.

In the context of this legacy, Canada's early links with the Southeast Asian region were modest indeed. In the 1920s trade missions were opened in Singapore and Batavia, later to become Jakarta. Although a consulate general was opened in Manila in 1949, our first diplomatic post in the region was opened in Jakarta in 1953. Ties with Malaysia and Singapore began with the Commonwealth connection, subsequently supplemented by the evolution of our aid program under the umbrella of the Colombo Plan.

The end of the first Indochina war in 1954, marked the beginning of Canada's participation in the international efforts to find a lasting peace in the troubled Indochinese peninsula. While the Canadian participation in the International Control Commissions did not bring peace to Indochina, we persisted for almost 20 years in these efforts because we believed that we had a contribution to make in upholding a painfully achieved peace and in advancing the cause of stability in the political turmoil of the region at the time. One long-range result of this Canadian presence in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos was the sense of involvement of a whole generation of foreign service officers to Southeast Asia. At one point, as many as 30 per cent of the whole External Affairs officers corps had served in Indochina. The experience acquired in Southeast Asia by External Affairs subsequently very much kindled

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Canadian interest in that part of the world, which until 1954 had been relatively unknown to Canadians. Thus, as we enter the last quarter of this century, the growth of our links with Southeast Asia have witnessed a remarkably accelerated evolution.

The minister's activities here in the region over the last week illustrate the vitality of Canada's current relations with Southeast Asia, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Last week he met with the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries to exchange views on global economic issues as well as regional and international political developments which concern all of us. This is the third such meeting I have attended. Yearly consultations with the ASEAN foreign ministers have become an important item on the minister's agenda. This recent meeting also afforded an opportunity to review the great progress that has been achieved during the last year in Canada-ASEAN relations. In September 1981 in New York the five ASEAN foreign ministers and Dr. MacGuigan signed an agreement on economic co-operation. The agreement establishes a framework under the aegis of a joint co-operation committee for combined co-operation in industrial, technical development and commercial fields. During the past year, specific agreements with ASEAN have also been concluded on forestry and fisheries projects. And, last month, the third Canadian-ASEAN Dialogue took place in Manila. In this dialogue views were exchanged on a wide range of economic and trade topics and specific areas for co-operation in the industrial and commercial sectors were identified — agriculture and forestry, energy, science and technology, as well as transportation, communications, human resource development, information and culture.

**Increased
economic ties**

The growth of economic and political consultations, and the expanding co-operation in development activities, attest to a strong commitment at the government-to-government level to enhancing economic ties between ASEAN and Canada. Parallel with these official links are the impressive efforts and achievements of our business sector. Commercial relations between ASEAN and Canada, viewed against our global trading patterns, have achieved important dimensions. In the period between 1975 and 1980 two-way trade between Canada and ASEAN more than trebled from a level of \$350 million to over \$1 billion. The real growth rate of Canadian exports to ASEAN from 1975 to 1980 was 19 per cent. In comparison, the growth rate of Canadian exports to the rest of the world was 6 per cent over the same period. A number of Canadian companies — among them Inco, Bata, Alcan, Northern Telecom, Husky Oil — have large investments in the area and the major Canadian banks are all represented in the region. An important event in contributing toward a more mutually beneficial relationship involving the private sector is the CANEX '82 exhibition which I will be opening here in Singapore tomorrow on behalf of the minister. This regional technology transfer exhibition, which is being funded through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has attracted over 20 Canadian firms and many candidates for joint ventures.

The tremendous growth in Canada-ASEAN relations in this field clearly illustrates the

importance this region has come to assume in Canada's external relations. With its large population and rich resource base it has become one of the fastest growing regions in the world. Projections are that real gross national product will average 6 to 9 per cent annually over the years ahead. For Canada, a country which earns almost one-third of its gross national product through trade, ASEAN is an area of vital interest.

More bilateral exchanges

A solid pattern of bilateral relationships between Canada and the individual member countries of ASEAN has developed. It is the country-to-country relationship which nourishes and enhances the over-all relationships with ASEAN as a whole. The number of senior level and ministerial visits between Canada and the countries of ASEAN has grown dramatically in the last few years. The visits have facilitated bilateral exchanges and consultation on political issues and in many diverse fields — energy, resources, trade, education, science and technology, North-South issues. This list of shared interests is an impressive indicator of the convergence of Canadian and Southeast Asian interests on a number of fronts.

Development co-operation is an important element in our bilateral relationships. Indonesia is among the largest recipients of Canadian development assistance. In the past year we have launched a development assistance program in Thailand. In the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore development co-operation is conducted through CIDA's Special Programs Branch with particular emphasis on industrial and institutional co-operation. Indeed, our industrial co-operation program has brought to ASEAN more projects than in any other region in the world.

The Canadian presence in Southeast Asia is also manifested through the activities of non-governmental organizations, universities, and other institutions through the region. The locating of the Asia Regional Office of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Singapore, the IDRC's support for many projects in the ASEAN countries, and its important role in this conference demonstrate Canada's strong commitment to working with the Southeast Asian research community in tackling the great challenges of development.

Perhaps the one dimension of Southeast Asia that has had the most direct impact on Canadians at large, and has so greatly heightened the profile of Southeast Asia in Canada, is the massive exodus of Indochinese refugees. We can take pride and feel some satisfaction in Canada's response to a crisis which threatened the social fabric and stability of several ASEAN countries. Canada's humanitarian concern and our commitment to maintaining peace and stability in Southeast Asia resulted in our accepting over 70 000 refugees from Indochina since the Communist victories in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975.

Greater cultural awareness

Canada's strong cultural ties across the Atlantic are rooted in the early patterns of settlement in our country. The growing presence of a Southeast Asian community in Canada — Indochinese, Filipino, Malaysian — has in a few short years altered and

enriched the diverse Canadian mosaic. And it has brought a greater sense of awareness of our Pacific and Asian dimension to the Canadian public at large. I believe this human factor will contribute significantly to broadening the focus of Canadians on the cultural and human bonds with Southeast Asia. And it will cement a firm foundation of Canadian ties with Southeast Asia.

I have dwelt at some length on our economic and trade relations with ASEAN and on the human dimension of our links with the Southeast Asian region. As important as these areas are and as impressive as progress has been in expanding relations in them, we must not lose sight of the central fact that it all rests on a foundation of political stability and a strong political commitment.

**Commitment
to peace and
stability**

The rapid growth in the last decade in relations between Canada and Southeast Asia has been made possible by a stable and healthy political relationship. The factor that has most encouraged the relationship in the development of ASEAN itself is the strong commitment of its member countries to peace and stability. The development of ASEAN is a striking example of a concerted political effort to resolve differences and co-operate in the pursuit of peace and stability. It was not too long ago that relationships between the countries which now form the Association were characterized by conflict of varying degrees of severity.

Internal changes and developments within the ASEAN countries themselves, and the threat posed by an expansionist Vietnam, were major political factors which encouraged greater co-operation among the countries of that organization.

We have been greatly impressed by ASEAN's growth and sense of common destiny, and by the economic and social progress achieved in the region. In the efforts to promote and encourage peace and stability in Southeast Asia the interests of Canada and ASEAN converge. One of the world's tragedies continues to be played out in Indochina and Canada continues to be deeply involved and committed to seeking a resolution of underlying problems. The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia poses, in our view, a major threat to peace and stability in Asia. Canada will do everything it can to help ASEAN in the search for a peaceful settlement in Cambodia which will remove foreign occupation from that country, provide for the Khmer people to choose their own government free from external pressures, and halt the flow of refugees.

The minister has assured the ASEAN foreign ministers that as long as Vietnam refuses to end its occupation of Cambodia, Canada will not help to subsidize its military activities by extending development aid to Vietnam. At the same time, we shall continue to share in the refugee burden that has fallen on the shoulders of the countries of ASEAN.

As I stated at the outset of this address, Canada's relations with Southeast Asia have

come of age. I have attempted to sketch in some of the highlights of success achieved and the milestones met in Canada-ASEAN relations over the last few years — and the attention we continue to focus on and the support we continue to give ASEAN in the search for a peaceful settlement to the crisis still afflicting Indochina. We have achieved much. But there is still more to be done, new opportunities to be pursued, challenges to be met. A Canada that is informed about Southeast Asia, that is schooled in the traditions and heritage of this region, that is debating and examining the issues in the region and Canada's approach to them — that will have to form a vital element in the continuing growth of relations. And that is an area where this conference, and the Canadian Council for Southeast Asian Studies, are making a most valuable contribution.

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