



STATEMENT

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO THE ASEAN POST-MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
SIX PLUS SEVEN OPEN SESSION

BANGKOK, Thailand
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished colleagues:

It is a privilege and a pleasure for me for the first time to represent Canada at the annual ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] Post-Ministerial Conference. The Post Ministerial Conference [PMC] has become an important fixture in the calendars of successive Canadian foreign ministers since Canada became a Dialogue Partner in 1977. I look forward to the opportunity to benefit from the shared experience of this gathering and to contribute Canada's perspective on the important issues we shall be discussing.

With the inauguration yesterday of the ASEAN Regional Forum [ARF] we have opened another important channel for consultations within the ASEAN-led process.

With the ARF we have started something new — something that both reflects the profoundly changed international situation and signals the way for the future. Inspired by the ASEAN traditions of discussion and consensus, we have begun to develop a framework for a co-operative security dialogue which will contribute to stability and prosperity in the region.

The Canadian government is committed to promoting the full range of Canada's interests and values in the conduct of our international affairs, be they human rights, the environment, the economy, trade or peace and security. In this context, we are committed to expanding our relations with the Asia-Pacific region. This new emphasis is reflected in the review of our foreign policy being conducted by the Parliament of Canada.

The threats to international peace and security are changing rapidly. We will continue to shift away from security structures designed to contain Cold War threats and toward new architectures designed to manage instability. The creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum is an important step in this process.

We must prevent possible new sources of conflict by strengthening programs aimed at dismantling nuclear weapons and reducing conventional arms transfers. We should universalize the Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] which is up for renewal next April. In particular, the countries of South Asia and the Middle East should accede to the NPT in the interest of their own security. North Korea presents a special case. It must live up to its NPT and safeguards obligations that it entered into freely.

Large-scale movements of peoples, whether refugees displaced by persecution or persons seeking improved economic conditions, are continuing. We see this throughout the world whether it be Rwanda in Africa, Haiti in the Western Hemisphere or Burma in this region. We must work together to address the root causes of migratory pressures and not just deal with the consequences.

One root cause is the pursuit of nationalism as a political ideology. We all have an obligation to ensure that our ethnic, religious and cultural minorities are not the subject of intolerance and mistreatment.

Economically, we are faced with explosive change. Dramatic developments in technology are driving changes in the organization of production, in investment patterns and in financial transfers. These trends are particularly noticeable in the Asia-Pacific region. In managing these changes we must be sensitive to the importance of protecting the natural environment.

Looking at the immediate region, we continue to applaud the prosperity of ASEAN and its members, recognizing of course that this prosperity is based on maintaining peace and security. Canada's interest in furthering this objective is reflected in the practical contributions we continue to make in the region, from the provision of de-mining expertise in Cambodia to the sponsorship with Indonesia of informal talks on tensions in the South China Sea.

I would like to address briefly three issues which are of particular interest to ASEAN and to the Dialogue Partners. I speak of Cambodia, Viet Nam and Burma. Cambodia represents one of the great successes, and continuing challenges, of international peacekeeping. Canada was proud to be a signatory to the Paris Peace Accords. We provided over 200 service personnel and 100 civilians as our contribution to the largest peacekeeping operation in the United Nations history.

It is thus with increasing concern that we note recent developments in the country that now threaten the gains which have been achieved at such cost. The Khmer Rouge, whose appalling human rights abuses shocked the world in the 1970s and which boycotted the UN-sponsored elections, are continuing the civil conflict in the country. While, ultimately, Cambodians themselves must achieve a lasting peace to allow the reconstruction of their country, it is in the interest of the entire international community to ensure that the legitimately elected government is supported and that strong measures are taken to ensure that the Khmer Rouge receive no assistance from any source.

Viet Nam is continuing its reintegration into the regional and world economies, a process which receives Canada's full support. Our bilateral relations with Viet Nam are continuing to improve. In June, Canada welcomed Viet Nam's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Phan Van Khai. During that visit Canada and Viet Nam signed the first agreements between our two countries in the spheres of economic and development co-operation. In this context, we look forward to a rapidly expanding relationship.

We are concerned that stability in another part of the region remains elusive. I am speaking of Burma, where the military regime continues to block democratic reform, detain political opponents without trial and impose harsh and unjust treatment on large segments of the population. While Burma's opening to its neighbours after decades of self-imposed isolation is encouraging and may offer the hope that the regime's policies will moderate over time, we need to see evidence of real commitment to political reform.

We call on the Burmese regime to respond to the concerns of the international community by releasing all political prisoners and by taking concrete measures for the restoration of democracy. We hope that other countries, including our ASEAN partners, will take account of these concerns in their approach to Burma, perhaps in the form of benchmarks that would measure the progress of reform.

Canada is committed to develop its relations with the Asia-Pacific community. With the new ASEAN Regional Forum, the ASEAN PMC, and APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum], we now have a complete range of fora to address specific issues and to engage in co-operation in specific areas.

We look forward to working closely with you.

Thank you.