

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires
extérieures

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AS DELIVERED

AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE
ASEAN POST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
SIX PLUS SEVEN MEETING

MANILA, The Philippines
July 24, 1992

Distinguished delegates:

Last year, the world witnessed an unprecedented series of wrenching human events. Whether inspired by great human courage or by a tragic and reflexive return to preoccupations of the past, these events will leave their mark.

The aftershocks of the events of 1991 have travelled around the world, changing patterns of human behaviour just as Pinatubo's ashes have changed patterns of global weather.

The most fundamental change brought about in our global order is to have freed it from its previous moorings. This has given us the opportunity to collectively reorient our world to more acceptable standards of behaviour, standards we have all acknowledged through the United Nations Charter.

As we have weighed anchor from past rigidities, we have seen barriers to the movement of goods and people and ideas collapse. We have seen distances between us close, but not all. Some of the distances -- between rich and poor, between aggressors and peacemakers, between those who conserve and those who waste -- have not been significantly reduced. If we are to achieve the kind of world conceived in the UN Charter, we must strive to reduce those differences.

Reducing distances and bridging gaps: that is, in the end, what you have all eloquently been speaking about this morning.

One significant step in reducing distances is the engagement of dialogue -- informal and formal -- on security issues. What we are trying to do is to enhance understanding, to identify and reaffirm common principles, and to build on the solid foundation of existing security arrangements both bilateral and multilateral.

There are many practical things that we can do, in support of the dialogue on security issues that we are opening at this meeting. For example, together with our Indonesian partners, Canada has been sponsoring informal talks on reducing tensions in the South China Sea. In so doing we are not trying to impose solutions from elsewhere, but simply trying to see if other experiences in the peaceful settlement of disputes might not be useful in the building of confidence among and between countries of the region.

As our dialogue on security issues evolves, there may be other areas where such co-operative ventures may be helpful, from traditional confidence and security-building measures, to a possible focus on non-traditional security questions: the drug trade, migration, perhaps even environment.

However it might be defined in future, the important thing today is that we have agreed that a security dialogue is in our common interest.

Distinguished delegates, sharing our experience is also a way to reduce our human distances. For this reason, Canada applauds the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for following Malaysia's lead in engaging Russia and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) in ASEAN deliberations.

Russia is going through a period of extraordinary upheaval, but in its quest for new democratic and economic systems, it is drawing on the best political and economic experience in the West, Asia and the world. ASEAN clearly has a significant contribution to make in this dramatic and difficult transition.

With regard to China, Canada is encouraged by recent action by the P.R.C. to aid the peace process in Cambodia. Without China's participation, the Paris International Conference on Cambodia and the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) would not have been possible. And China's recent decision to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a major contribution to world peace and stability.

However, some recent actions are troublesome. The P.R.C.'s recent nuclear explosion test is regrettable; the decision to explode one of the largest devices in history is clearly out of step with the rest of the world today. It is wrong in and of itself, and it sends the wrong message, especially to countries such as North Korea, India and Pakistan.

Canada is disappointed by the continued support the P.R.C. appears to be giving to the repressive regime in Burma. At the UN General Assembly this fall, we should be collectively calling for a military embargo of Burma.

Once again, we must urge the government of Burma to release all political prisoners. We must call on them particularly to release Nobel peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi unconditionally and immediately, and to restore the rightfully elected members of Parliament to their seats.

Canada is disappointed that a discussion of Burma is not part of our formal ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) agenda. Hopefully, we shall find opportunities to thoroughly examine this tragic situation, which is a blight on the regional landscape that cries out for concerted action. Aside from the human tragedy inside Burma's borders, spreading instability threatens the region. Internal repression has external consequences. For example, in this case, the large numbers of refugees fleeing to Bangladesh are beyond the capacity of that very poor country to cope. The impact on ASEAN members, too, is considerable. Canada understands and shares ASEAN frustrations in Burma's lack of response to ASEAN's policy of "quiet diplomacy." The time is ripe for more vocal and firmer action.

Mr. Chairman, peace and stability demand vigilance. Canada intends to remain vigilant -- in every region of the world.

Canadians strongly support UN efforts to restore peace in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge, however, still threaten that peace and the viability of UNTAC. As long as the Khmer Rouge finds willing partners to help perpetuate their existence outside the mainstream of Cambodian political development, they are in a position to use force to control territory, terrorize their own people and threaten the peace process. We all have a duty to ensure that peace and democracy are restored to all of Cambodia.

Fellow delegates, the quest for security cannot be divorced from the need to enhance global economic prosperity. The key factor for world prosperity must be a satisfactory outcome to the frustrating impasse in the Multilateral Trade Negotiations. We welcome the modest impetus to an early conclusion for that process given in the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized countries summit Declaration. We continue to believe that a balanced package remains within reach.

It is in this setting that we welcome the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA). Commitment to AFTA and to open regionalism confirms the vigour of ASEAN as an economic force in Asia and beyond.

AFTA is a positive development in the context both of worldwide efforts to reduce protectionism and its parallel with our own participation in the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement. These open, regional arrangements, when they are consistent with GATT, can well lead our collective efforts toward ongoing global trade liberalization.

ASEAN also has a particularly important role to play in Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) as we collectively strive to forge an open Pacific trading community. We see the aims of both ASEAN and APEC as being compatible, complementary and important.

The world has marvelled at the impressive economic growth in Southeast Asia. Canadians, coming out of a difficult recession, envy your steady record of high growth rates. ASEAN countries are the economic leaders of the so-called developing world. One by one, the ASEAN countries are finding their own particular approaches to an internally generated cycle of growth and are crossing the development threshold.

This progress represents a remarkable achievement, earning the respect of countries around the world.

Other countries, including Canada, look to your countries for the political and social leadership, which accompany economic leadership, consistent with themes I have spoken of here today.

Canadians look for progress in the areas of human rights, democratization and good governance to accompany economic development. Peace, tolerance, freedom and respect for the individual are responsibilities of all governments, and are the best rewards for their own peoples.

This is not imposing our particular values on others, nor insisting on the transposing of our institutions on cultures with different roots and traditions. It is, however, saying that there are principles and standards that have been universally agreed upon, as you, yourselves enunciated in your declaration at the conclusion of your Ministerial meeting.

Even as we believe in the fundamental importance of individual rights, we recognize other rights with which they must co-exist: the rights of groups, of communities, and communities of nations. We also understand and share your belief that individual rights imply social duties.

Without an acceptable and accepted balance between rights and duties, there can be no real internal stability on which sustainable progress and peace must be built.

And surely if we are to consolidate the gains of the past and confront the awesome challenges of the future, we must have peace as our primary goal.

Peace is more than the absence of war. It is the full expression of the human individual, or in the words of the UN Charter to which we are all signatories, "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

Distinguished delegates, Canada is proud to be an ASEAN dialogue partner. We join with you in marking ASEAN's 25 years as an organization at the same time that we, in Canada, celebrate 125 years as an independent nation.

Canada after 125 years -- like ASEAN after 25 years -- is still evolving. ASEAN unity was forged out of a shared appreciation that the benefits of acting together far outweighed the risks of acting alone. ASEAN is proving itself to be a model of regional co-operation that recognizes the value of democracy, accommodates diversity, builds on common values and encourages positive change in response to evolving circumstances. The major realignment of global power and priorities in the wake of the end of the Cold War presents a unique opportunity for the consolidation of the gains ASEAN has made over its first 25 years.

There is no question that the future of ASEAN is bright. Canada applauds ASEAN's past success and looks forward to the leadership that ASEAN can provide in every area of human endeavour.