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87/36

Notes for an introductory
statement by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, to the ASEAN
Post-Ministerial Conference
Six-Plus-Six Meeting

SINGAPORE, June 18, 1987

OTTAWA

June 22, 1987.

Mr. Chairman:

This is a milestone year for your Association. Twenty years ago, five leaders with great prescience met in Bangkok and pledged that cooperation, civility and concertation were to be the benchmarks for relations in Southeast Asia. Your countries, the region and the world have benefited enormously from their foresight. I noted Chairman Dhanabalan's remarks suggesting that dialogue partners take a "fresh look" at their relationship with ASEAN in anticipation of the ASEAN Summit in December and Canada will certainly do that.

Regional Security

Our agenda makes clear that, while peace and cooperation are the hallmarks of relations within ASEAN, there are forces at work beyond the region that threaten not only your security but that of the world at large.

I welcome the very positive formulations, starting with General-Secretary Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, that have increasingly characterized Soviet pronouncements relating to the region.

Unfortunately, expressions of good intention have not been followed by action. We can only take seriously the professed Soviet interest in constructive Asian diplomacy if there are concrete initiatives to end long-festering disputes. Like you, I am still awaiting such specific Soviet initiatives.

Moreover, while Soviet rhetoric about its peaceful intentions has grown, its huge military buildup continues. The Soviet nuclear and conventional arsenal in Asia and the Pacific is a threat to your security and to Canada's. Nothing would more dramatically prove the good intentions of the Soviet Union than a political settlement in Indochina, and the total withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

The brutal Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is the most eloquent statement of Soviet intentions in Asia.

Indochina

Canada fully shares and endorses your recent statement on Indochina. We are now well into the eighth year of Vietnam's ongoing occupation of Cambodia and Vietnam continues to dominate Laos. Canadians are also most concerned at the continuing artillery attacks on civilian refugee camps along the Thai border and Vietnam's violation of Thailand's territorial sovereignty. The world deeply appreciates the collective efforts of ASEAN to bring about an equitable and peaceful settlement. I pledge Canada's continued support to this end, including financial support for the non-communist elements of the coalition government.

We urge the new Vietnamese leadership to demonstrate some willingness to work towards a meaningful peaceful settlement in Cambodia. Moscow must impress upon Vietnam's leaders that it is in their joint interest to adopt more flexible policies. No better test of Soviet intentions in this region can be provided than to see it exercise some of its known influence in Vietnam on the side of moderation and compromise.

I reiterate Canada's pledge not to provide development assistance to Vietnam while that country continues its aggression in Cambodia.

The real tragedy of Indochina is still measured in the thousands of people who continue to seek new lives beyond the reach of Hanoi. By foot and by boat, they continue to strive for safe refuge in neighbouring countries. Mr. Chairman, ASEAN's response to this human tragedy has been outstanding.

Canada has been closely associated with you in seeking both temporary and long-term durable solutions. We have contributed tens of millions of dollars to support refugees during their period of first asylum. As well, we have provided permanent homes in Canada for over one hundred thousand refugees from the region, and you have my commitment we will play an active part in the future.

In trying to develop more durable solutions to the influx of thousands of people who arrive on your shores and across your borders, Canada will continue to work together with Australia, Japan and the United States in the International Contact Group. I am hopeful that, in the near future, we will be able to provide the UNHCR with an agreed paper on possible longer term initiatives that could be undertaken. We will, of course, want to share our proposals with you. Through cooperation and collaboration, we must seek a more comprehensive response to the problem of Indochinese refugees.

South Africa

Mr. Chairman, beyond this region, other violent conflicts continue to bring misery and oppression to millions of people. I have noted and welcome your statement on South Africa. At the Venice Summit, Canada sought and obtained a discussion on South Africa in which there was a strong consensus that apartheid must be ended. Canada is working with some of you in the Commonwealth, and elsewhere, to maintain steady pressure upon Pretoria, and to keep lines open to those whose cooperation in Southern Africa might prevent plunging that subcontinent into bloody violence.

Narcotics Control

Regarding illicit drugs, the Conference now underway in Vienna may provide both the political will and an action plan for dealing with this menace to all our societies.

Canada will be increasing its contributions to the United Nations Fund on Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC). These will be earmarked for development projects in drug production regions and will help improve health services and provide support for alternate crops.

International Economic Situation

Mr. Chairman, the Economic Summit held in Venice last week made significant progress in a number of areas of crucial importance to all of us. We in Canada will be seeking to build on these results as we prepare to host a succession of important meetings, including the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and La Francophonie Summit this fall, and the Toronto Economic Summit next June.

In Venice, we agreed on means to reduce the international economic imbalances which are a major obstacle to improving the prospects for economic growth, both in developed and developing countries. The Venice Communique also made specific reference to the need for the newly industrialized countries to take on more responsibility in maintaining a sound world economy and trading system, bearing in mind their rapid growth and large external surpluses.

Canada was pleased that the Venice meeting devoted more attention than usual to the economic situation of developing countries. In this context, I should say that the ASEAN Memorandum was most helpful. We emphasized the plight of the poorest countries whose resources are clearly inadequate to allow them to deal with their crushing burden of debt, and discussed specific and practical solutions.

In international trade, we must work together to ensure that the Uruguay Round achieves the results which ASEAN members did so much to achieve at Punta Del Este last September. The Venice Summit supported an early results package in Geneva. If we are to ensure credibility for the Uruguay Round, as urged in the ASEAN statement for the Venice Summit, we must ensure that early results become a reality. In our view, one promising area for rapid progress is to strengthen the GATT system.

Mr. Chairman, we all know that we are involved as individual countries in an increasing number of bilateral trade disputes. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to resolve those disputes by circumventing GATT rules. Accordingly, a priority for Canada - one that we share with ASEAN - is the need to ensure that standstill and rollback commitments be fully implemented. We have reaffirmed this commitment at Venice.

Agriculture is of major importance to both Canada and to the majority of ASEAN countries. Canadian farmers, like those of ASEAN, are caught in the cross-fire of an agricultural subsidy war that is not of our making. These tensions in agricultural trade threaten the world trading system and the Uruguay Round.

This is why Canada placed agriculture high on our agenda for the recent meetings of trade ministers and why we hosted a meeting of the Cairns Group of Agricultural Fair Traders in Ottawa in May. At the Cairns ministerial, we were able to reinforce the growing consensus in favour of early agricultural reform. Cairns Group concerns were conveyed by Prime Minister Mulroney to other Summit leaders. These concerns were very similar to those outlined in the ASEAN Memorandum to the Summit countries.

Once again in Venice, as at the Tokyo Summit, the Prime Minister of Canada sought priority attention for the issue of agriculture. Canada was pleased with the outcome; Summit leaders themselves reaffirmed the commitment to what they called "the important agreement on agriculture in the OECD Ministerial Communique", and agreed formally to have the question reviewed at the Toronto Summit next year.

There will be no quick fixes, but there is now recognition that agricultural subsidies must be reduced, and other reform measures pursued. As outlined in the ASEAN Memorandum, these include the separation of income support for farmers from producer prices. There is a recognition that predatory and protectionist trade practices cannot be continued. And there is a recognition that the Uruguay Round negotiations must be quickly advanced. These are valid prescriptions for all countries, not just Summit countries.

On the MTN, Summit leaders provided for the early tabling of comprehensive proposals for negotiations and undertook to review, at the 1988 Summit in Toronto, the progress achieved and the tasks that remain. You can be assured that Canada will again attach priority to this issue in Toronto next year. Meanwhile, we will continue to work closely with ASEAN members to advance the Uruguay Round.

Mr. Chairman, colleagues, thank you again for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you.