

# STATEMENT DISCOURS



SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY OF  
STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
THE HONOURABLE ALLAN J.  
MACÉACHEN, AT THE  
CANADA-ISRAEL COMMITTEE  
LUNCHEON

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Rabbi Plaut, Your Excellency Ambassador Shalev and distinguished dignitaries at the head table, ladies and gentlemen,

May I begin by thanking you for the kind invitation to speak to you today. As you know, I spoke at the Beth Tzedec Synagogue in Toronto on February 26; on March 11 I met with representatives of the Canada-Israel Committee and only last Monday I had a meeting with representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress. In the course of these dialogues, it has been possible to deal with quite a range of issues of interest to you and of interest to me. In the course of the meetings with the Canada-Israel Committee and the Canadian Jewish Congress to which I have just referred we were able to deal with in some detail eight subjects of interest which will be of continuing concern to me and to you as we move ahead along the path that was so eloquently described for us by your Chairman.

Today's luncheon provides a further opportunity to continue our dialogue on issues which are of particular concern to the Jewish community and if, in my comments today, I do not deal with all the issues of interest to you, you will understand that they have been live subjects already under discussion and will be under discussion between us in the future.

What I do want to do in my remarks at this luncheon is to mention my visit to Israel last January and particularly my discussions with the Israeli leaders. My visit to Israel was a reaffirmation of the importance we attach to Canada-Israel relations in the bilateral sphere and a reminder in the context of my Middle East visit that we remain solidly behind Israel in insisting on a just and peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict, a just and peaceful solution, which recognizes and respects Israel's basic rights. There are, of course, a great many official and unofficial links between Canada and Israel which attest to the closeness of our relations, and I considered that an official visit by the Secretary of State for External Affairs was overdue after an interval of almost seven years. Moreover, I wanted to get to know the Israeli leaders on a personal basis and discuss with them a number of points that are of interest internationally and bilaterally.

I should add that I also had personal reasons for wishing to go to the Holy Land because of my interest in the many religious and historical sites which are such a vital part of our common heritage. Furthermore, I wanted to observe at first hand some of the new types of community that the Israelis have so successfully created and obtain some insight into the reasons why these new ways of social organization have not only flourished in their own setting but also provided so many of Israel's most dynamic citizens and leaders.

But I should like to turn for a moment to my discussions with Foreign Minister Allon. I remember these talks with particular pleasure - the Ambassador tells me that it is harder for you to pronounce MacEachen in Israeli than it is for me to pronounce Allon - well, I hope I do respect to his name's pronunciation, but I certainly want to do respect to the impression which the Foreign Minister of Israel created upon me in the course of a very good and wide-ranging session during which we explained our respective persistence in exploring new ways of cooperation between our countries.

I took the opportunity to reiterate in these official talks that the continued existence of Israel remains the cornerstone of Canadian policy and I stressed that this is not an attitude that we maintain passively but that we defend this principle actively and vigorously in international fora. By the same token, we refuse to become a party to attempts to undermine the legitimacy of the state of Israel in international bodies and we ensure that our policy in that regard is clearly understood, and I appreciate the references you have made, Rabbi Plaut, to these instances which I would like to refer to later in the course of my remarks.

The Foreign Minister of Israel and I also discussed our bilateral trade relations and I assured him, as I have wished to assure Canadian citizens, that Canada is ready to consider with Israel measures that might be used to facilitate Israel's entry into our market and that we would be happy as a Government to consult on ways in which our economic cooperation generally could be improved. I suggested that it might be useful if officials of our two countries got together to discuss specific ways to bring us closer to this common objective.

As an example of our already in place economic cooperation, I mentioned that the Export Development Corporation had been active in Israel and had extended a considerable amount of credit. I added also that it was still in this field, and still prepared and ready to consider applications on a case-by-case basis. Probably the most interesting proposal and the most valuable proposal that came out of our discussions on economic bilateral relations was the proposition put forward by the Foreign Minister that further acceleration of our joint economic cooperation might be achieved by setting up a Joint Committee of businessmen and officials which would meet regularly. While there is a great deal of informal contact between the people of Canada and Israel and while there is a flow of businessmen from one country to the other, there does seem to be some merit in establishing a more formal framework through such a Joint Committee to further our economic cooperation. I have since then had an opportunity to raise the matter with my colleagues in the Cabinet, the proposition was well received, and the view was that our bilateral relations could benefit from the creation of such a formal body. As Mr. Shalev has mentioned to me, now it is a matter for the bureaucrats on both sides to carry forward this political will and to establish a framework, an official framework, in which this further cooperation can take place.

I was particularly intrigued by the description made by the Foreign Minister, of Israel's development program in various parts of the world. Israel is a relatively small country gripped with difficulties but in that context it has not failed to respond to the global challenge of development in the underdeveloped parts of the world, in the third world, as that part of the globe is called, and the proposal now under consideration is that it might be possible for Canada and Israel to cooperate in the international development field for the benefit of third countries where our approaches and resources might compliment one another. It seems to me that bringing Canada and Israel together in development work in third countries would provide an opportunity for the expression of our common values and an opportunity to implement the ideals which we hold together in terms of international development.

I wanted to make this very clear in my visit, that apart from the difficulties that may exist in the Middle East conflict we should not take our eye off the long-term objective of increasing mutually beneficial bilateral relations with Israel and that is also an important element in my government's foreign policy - that while we may be agitated, and rightfully so, with respect to developments at the United Nations and other international bodies, there is a constructive field of endeavour open to us bilaterally that probably will do more to forge links between these countries than speeches and rhetoric in international bodies, though I do not doubt the value of these approaches. I thought that if out of my visit there could come a Joint Economic Committee - Canada-Israel - a joint international effort in third world countries, then indeed my visit would have been well justified.

I also stressed with the Foreign Minister our desire to increase our political consultations on the international level. Not only do we want to deepen our relationship bilaterally, but I believe there is a place for increased consultations between Israel and Canada on international questions which are vital issues to both countries particularly with respect to the Middle East.

As you know, in the course of my conversations with the Foreign Minister, he indicated to me the positive attitude which his Government is taking towards HABITAT. As you know, Mr. Allon confirmed to me officially that Israel would be participating and he stressed that the concept of HABITAT was very close to his heart and the heart of the people of Israel as it was to the Israeli architect who had built the first "Habitat" at the time of the 1967 Montreal EXPO. I found these exchanges very illuminating and helpful. In the course of my discussions, I invited Mr. Allon to pay an official visit to Canada. He has taken up the invitation and now it remains for him and ourselves to decide on a mutually beneficial or mutually convenient date this year so that a further step will be taken in this process of improving and developing our bilateral relations. As His Excellency Mr. Shalev knows, because he accompanied me on these visits, I had the great fortune to have a long and useful private meeting with the Prime Minister who briefed me in great detail on his country's attitude to

Middle East peace negotiations and to complete my discussions with top Israeli leaders I was received for an interview with the President himself.

I mentioned earlier, Mr. Chairman, my interest in the new types of communities that the Israelis have created, and my hosts had kindly arranged for a trip to the northern part of the country and I made stops at the Kibbutz Gonen and the cooperative village of Kfar Yuval, and I also made a tour of the Hula Valley. I found this trip a unique experience and it is certainly essential for anyone who wishes to gain some insight into the strength of the Israeli character and personality. I was impressed by the results that the settlers have achieved by good planning, determination, hard work and a more than ordinary amount of courage. These settlements are a tribute to the spirit of the Israeli pioneers and I am grateful that I had an opportunity to see them at work and to hear their views. It was my conclusion on the personal level that my understanding of the people had increased immeasurably by these personal contacts and my tour of the Hula Valley gave me a comprehension hitherto not experienced of the great importance to Israel of the border question and an appropriate and satisfactory settlement of the border question.

May I turn just for a moment Mr. Chairman, because you mentioned it, and because it is very much on my mind, to Canada's support of Israel's legitimate rights at the United Nations and elsewhere.

I believe an examination of the Canadian record reveals that the positions we take are based on principles and that we adopt a firm and positive posture in defence of those principles and in defence of fair play. I am concerned that our foreign policy with respect to the Middle East will be based upon principles that are supportable by you and by the Canadian people. In the implementation of these principles, there are obvious difficulties at times, as Rabbi Plaut pointed out. However, he did mention the most notorious case, in which it was possible for Canada to take a clear stand in support of fundamental principles. Last fall during the 30th Session of the U.N., we opposed the particular resolution that had linked racism with Zionism; we opposed it through our votes and our pronouncements at the United Nations, we opposed it in many capitals of the world in diplomatic representation, but I also opposed it when I was in the Middle East and in my visit to the various Arab countries. In fact, in a statement made in Jordan during my visit to the Middle East, I described this resolution as troublesome, unhelpful, and destructive, and I was prepared to say the same words that had been stated in the House of Commons, in the Arab world itself - and I believe that is a measure of the strength of our convictions. Not only did we regard that resolution with all the abhorrence that I have described, but we also felt that it had tainted two related resolutions concerning the program of the U.N. Decade against Racism and the holding of the U.N. Conference on Racism to take place in 1978. We voted also against these two resolutions, because they were stands on principle.

I hope it does comfort you and reassure you, ladies and gentlemen, as it does me, that the Parliament of Canada, the Members of the House of Commons and the Members of the Senate, in a unanimously adopted resolution, condemned in unequivocal terms the adoption of this resolution at the United Nations. I believe that Canada -the democratically-elected House of Commons and the Senate of Canada - were the only legislative bodies in the world that took this particular action. The same ugly subject has come up in technical meetings of the United Nations. I want to refer to some of the developments that take place at the specialized and technical agencies of the United Nations; the debates at these specialized agencies are not free from extraneous political considerations, the introduction of which make the functioning of these agencies very difficult indeed. To our regret and despite our opposition, the blatantly gratuitous and provocative issue of linking Zionism and racism was introduced in December in a UNESCO debate on a proposed international declaration on the mass media. Canada argued forcefully that the introduction of elements which are firmly opposed by a significant number of delegations made a successful outcome of the deliberations impossible, and also the introduction of such matters would not enhance the reputation of UNESCO in the international community. When our voice, based on practical considerations, when our voice spoken from principle, was not listened to, when what we said was disregarded, we, in company with other like-minded nations withdrew from the debate and left the meeting in order to express our opposition in the best way we knew at that time to the introduction of such matters into the United Nations. And my colleague, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, raised this subject in his speech, certainly with my concurrence, and quoted words which I uttered before another audience on this same subject of UNESCO. Now we are faced with a Conference to take place in Canada later this year, a major international conference in which Canada has a great interest and a great commitment and in which the world itself has a great commitment. We will do our utmost to keep this conference on the rails, to keep the discussion upon the major subjects that are before the conference, but if extraneous political questions are introduced, the Canadian Government will take its responsibility in this particular occasion as it has taken its responsibility amidst other challenges, some of which I have described today.

Now, just one more point: I am preventing myself, Rabbi, from getting to the question period but I do want to make one comment about my political conclusion as a result of my visit to the Middle East particularly with respect to the possibility of an early settlement.

I came away with a much greater appreciation of the intractability of the problem which is facing the countries of the Middle East. I came away also with an enhanced understanding of the necessity of permitting the parties themselves to work out solutions to this particular problem. I do not believe that it is possible to impose a settlement upon the parties, that settlement has to be worked out among themselves. I realize that in this world, in international fora and elsewhere, Israel has been under attack and Israel has been pushed around, but I wanted to tell you that one country is not pushing Israel around, either at international fora, or leaning upon it to accept positions alien to its own interests - that country is Canada. I want you to bear that in mind as you assess our foreign policy. We believe and we have repeatedly stated the necessity of a settlement arrived at by the parties. In this case, of course, Israel is a party. I believe that the Prime Minister said that "we are 50 per cent of the situation". I do not know whether he used that numerical quantity but certainly that was his idea. I came away really quite distressed because I did not see any prospect for an immediate settlement. I do not see any prospect of a resumption of shuttle diplomacy, nor do I see any prospect of a resumed international conference to settle the Middle East question at the present time. That situation will undoubtedly change as the political situation in various countries changes, but I want to mention that, in approaching any ultimate settlement which is so essential to the welfare of the people of Israel and all the people of the Middle East, Canada will stand by well-established principles and well-established cornerstones of its policy.

So, may I say in conclusion, and in reviewing my discussions with the Israeli leaders and my impressions of the country, that I consider that my visit was very successful. I have gained a better understanding of the Israeli attitude on questions that concern both our countries and I had the opportunity to explain our own position in considerable detail. Obviously, both sides benefit from closer contact and I hope that the momentum established through my visit can be maintained and that we will use to good advantage the friendly and easy relationship which happily exists between Canada and Israel.