

# STATEMENT DISCOURS

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Introductory remarks by the  
Honourable Jean Chrétien,  
Deputy Prime Minister  
and Secretary of State for  
External Affairs, at the  
Canada/ASEAN Dialogue  
meeting.

JAKARTA

July 13, 1984

It is appropriate, and symbolic, that my first official trip in my new role as Minister responsible for Canadian international relations has taken me westward across the Pacific to meet Canada's friends in Southeast Asia. It is a unique gathering bringing together as it does the Foreign Ministers of the ASEAN countries and the representatives of their "Dialogue" Partners, from the Pacific Rim and Europe. In consequence, in spite of having just stepped into this portfolio, I am with you today.

Canada very much values its "Dialogue" relationship with the Philippines and I would like to thank Foreign Minister Tolentino for his remarks. We in Canada were particularly pleased when you agreed to accept the offer by President Marcos to become Foreign Minister. Mr. Tolentino, you and I share not only a background in law and politics, but we also took up our present responsibilities on the same day, June 30th. A difference, however, is that you took on the job after elections - and I have taken it before. For both our sakes, I hope June 30th proves to be an auspicious day.

The commitment of Canadians to the Pacific dimension of our national identity has in recent years gained greatly in strength. The Canadian people recognize that their prosperity will depend increasingly on the pace of economic development achieved by the nations of the Asia-Pacific region. It is in keeping with this reality that Canada has targetted the expansion of economic ties with all member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as a key foreign policy objective. We recognize also that, to achieve this result, we must work towards a fully developed economic relationship encompassing: increased two-way trade; joint ventures and investment within both ASEAN and Canada; and a collective will to reduce impediments to trade and commercial cooperation. The expansion of economic ties was a major theme of visits to ASEAN countries by Prime Minister Trudeau and Trade Minister Regan. This theme was again endorsed within the past few months by the very successful visits of Prime Minister Mahathir and Prime Minister Prem to Canada.

The need to develop closer economic, commercial and trade relations among the countries bordering the Pacific was the focus of a positive and productive discussion during our meetings yesterday. Canada has a great interest - indeed a great self-interest - in the development of closer economic ties between our nations.

We are all free market economies with a readiness to reward enterprise and encourage investment. Consequently, while the Pacific Rim provides a framework within which we can develop our mutual economic interests - it is not now,

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and will never become, a barrier to the full development of economic links with other countries.

Canada welcomes the remarkable success of the ASEAN member nations in creating a sense of common destiny and a tradition of mutual support. Your achievements in this regard have allowed ASEAN to emerge as a bastion of stability, progress and freedom in Southeast Asia. ASEAN represents an undeniable political success which derives much of its strength from the tradition of consultation among its member states. We were particularly pleased when our fellow Commonwealth member Brunei became ASEAN's sixth member state earlier this year.

We all recognize that our economic and commercial objectives cannot be pursued in isolation from other realities. Canada recognizes that political stability and social progress are the foundations on which the economic development of the ASEAN countries must be based.

Canada, as you know, has consistently supported ASEAN's demands that Vietnamese troops withdraw from Cambodia. Over the past year ASEAN has maintained its position skillfully and the challenge remains for Vietnam to demonstrate some genuine flexibility. Conditions in Vietnam and Cambodia have caused thousands of people to flee these countries - and Canada has maintained its policy of accepting substantial numbers of refugees from Southeast Asia. We are also continuing to provide aid to refugees in Thailand and in the Thai border region. In fact, I can inform you that I have decided to approve \$2 million to refugee programs in Thailand. Following a request from the Prime Minister of Thailand, Canada has now agreed to provide a small, but symbolically significant, amount of non-military assistance to the non-Communist elements in the coalition government.

Canada's regional development assistance program makes our support for ASEAN concrete. This and other forms of ASEAN/Canada cooperation will be the subject of an extensive review and consultations during the next meeting of the Canada/ASEAN Joint Cooperation Committee, which is scheduled to be held in Manila in late September. As you are aware, Canada responded to a request from ASEAN by raising your concerns at the London Economic Summit. These included the need for a more liberalized trading system; the loss of momentum over commodities in UNCTAD; and the debt problem.

Mr. Chairman, the mechanisms to support greater cooperation between Canada and Southeast Asia continue to develop rapidly. Understanding and cooperation have been enhanced by the Pacific Rim Opportunities Conference and by meetings of the Pacific Basin Economic Committee. Last year Mr. MacEachen spoke to this meeting about the Canadian

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government's intention to create an Asia Pacific Foundation for the purpose of developing contacts and expanding mutual awareness between Canada and the countries across the Pacific. This vision has now become a reality. The Foundation has been established through unanimous consent of the Canadian Parliament, to be funded by the federal government, provincial governments and the private sector. With its offices in Vancouver, the Foundation will become the focal point of a broad range of activities aimed at strengthening commercial, developmental, cultural and educational cooperation across the Pacific.

Vancouver will also be the host city for EXPO 86, which I am informed will include an impressive ASEAN participation. This too will serve to symbolize Canada's growing relationship with Southeast Asia. Mr. Chairman, on this trip I have been deeply impressed by the dynamism of ASEAN as an institution and the vitality of its links with we "Dialogue" Partner countries. It is a great privilege and opportunity, as one of my very first acts as Minister for External Affairs, to participate in this event. The conference is a meeting of friends where issues are discussed constructively and frankly. I shall take back to Canada with me many ideas for further strengthening of the ties between your countries and mine. I look forward to returning to the region for next year's conference - provided of course that the June 30th date which Mr. Tolentino and I share is indeed as propitious as I hope and expect it to be.