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STATEMENT MADE ON FEBRUARY 6, 1973
BY MR. E. A. CÔTÉ,
THE CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE TO THE
MULTILATERAL PREPARATORY TALKS,
HELSINKI, REGARDING THE
PROPOSED CONFERENCE ON
SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

Mr. Chairman:

Although I note with satisfaction that we seem to agree that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe should discuss questions of human contacts, culture and information under a heading separate from that of economic questions, we must also take note of the differences of opinion concerning the heading itself.

The disagreement appears to some extent in the matter of whether relations between men of different countries should be given wider scope. Some statements seem to stress particularly the contacts which should not be encouraged and the restrictions which must be imposed. I am very conscious of the fact that the laws of men and the will of the sovereign state must be respected by the nationals of and the visitors to a country. With this consideration in mind, I maintain that we must find new means, which will be acceptable to all, of increasing contacts between men of different countries and enabling them to exchange ideas and information more freely.

Furthermore, some ambassadors have emphasized the fundamental role of the state and state institutions in the matter of relations between men of different countries and in the matter of international relations. If we wish to take a realistic attitude (as the Ambassador of Sweden pointed out in his opening statement), we must not expect the Conference to examine these problems from one standpoint only.

In this connection I would like to indicate my agreement with the point of view expressed by the Ambassador of Italy on February 7 concerning human rights and the central role of man in society. At the same time, I would like to stress that there are at least two concepts of human society. Thus I think that during our consultations we must seek to formulate the agenda items so that at the Conference the participating states can agree on certain general and practical measures for enabling man, individually and collectively, to exercise to the greatest possible extent his freedom of thought, movement and action in his relations with other men throughout the world.

We would also like to stress the humanitarian subjects proposed under the third agenda item, as the Ambassador of Switzerland did on February 7. Canada considers that the reuniting of families is a matter of the greatest importance. Here we are thinking especially of the large-scale upheaval in Europe during and after the two World Wars, which scattered so many families, particularly in Europe, although we have seen the consequences in North America as well. We believe that it is essential to find for these common problems a solution reflecting the wishes of all.

For all these reasons, as I indicated in my statement on January 16, Canada places considerable importance on the third item of the proposed agenda. It will take some time, but we must begin immediately to bring about gradual improvements in this situation, which we consider serious.

I earnestly hope that we will all reflect on this question in the weeks to come. We have taken such great interest in this proposal because we believe that the Danish proposal is based on long-familiar points of view, which have been expressed from many quarters during these consultations. We consider that the proposal by Mr. Hellbin, the Ambassador of Denmark, avoids suggesting measures which would do violence to any philosophy. This proposal repeats many times that the solutions must be reached collectively and must be acceptable to all. There can be no question of imposing an obligation against the will of

any state. We believe that the Danish proposals contain nothing which would prevent the participating nations, each in the full exercise of its sovereign will, from improving the lot of untold numbers of men, women and children in Europe.

We therefore consider that the document proposed by Denmark offers good chances of success for this aspect of the Conference. Part of our effort should be concentrated in this area. Here we can see strong possibilities of successfully reinforcing détente in Europe. This we believe can be brought about by enabling men from all countries to meet each other face to face, and by allowing them complete freedom to enjoy ties of family and friendship; the chances for collective security will be enhanced at the same time. On the other hand, we think that whatever tends to separate men makes them suspicious, discontented and ill-disposed, and thus encourages the feelings of insecurity which we have experienced and which we are attempting to eliminate.