



CANADA

COMMUNIQUÉ

No. 64

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 1, 1974

NO. 14 1974

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

CONFERENCE

WORLD FOOD CONFERENCE

ROME

NOVEMBER 5-16, 1974

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Mr. Earl Stewart, Department of Industry, Trade and
Commerce.

Miss Vivian Wightman, Department of Industry, Trade
and Commerce.

Mr. H. E. Ryan, Permanent Canadian Represent to the
F.A.O.

Mr. J. John, Department of Fisheries.

Mr. F. D. Pillarella, Secretary to the Delegation.

The Department of External Affairs announced today the membership of the Canadian Delegation to the World Food Conference. The Ministers in attendance at the Conference will be the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, and the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Eugene Whelan. Mr. MacEachen will attend the early days of the Conference and will deliver the principal Canadian statement in the plenary session on Wednesday, November 6. Mr. Whelan is to be Head of the Delegation.

Other representatives will be:

Mr. Klaus Goldschlag, Canadian Ambassador to Italy,
Deputy Head of the Delegation.

Mr. John Messer, Minister of Agriculture, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Normand Toupin, Minister of Agriculture, Quebec.

Mr. Paul Gérin-Lajoie, President, Canadian International
Development Agency.

Dr. Rolland Poirier, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Esmond Jarvis, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Department of Agriculture, and Co-ordinator, Grains Group.

Miss Margaret Meagher, Department of External Affairs.

Mr. Ghislain Hardy, Department of External Affairs.

Mr. Andrew Brewin, M.P., Greenwood (Parliamentary Observer).

Mr. William Jarvis, M.P., Perth-Wilmont (Parliamentary
Observer).

Mr. Irénée Pelletier, M.P., Sherbrooke (Parliamentary
Observer).

Advisors:

Dr. Gérald Trant, Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Frank Shefrin, Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Earl Drake, Vice-President, Canadian International
Development Agency.

Mr. Hans Hermens, Canadian International Development
Agency.

Mr. Robert Martin, Department of Finance.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The Conference has been called to deal with two perspectives of the world food problem:

(a) the immediate problem which is one of depleted world grain stocks, high prices for foodgrains, petroleum and agricultural inputs, physical shortage of fertilizers, and strain on the balance of payments of most developing countries; and

(b) the longer term problem, i.e., the situation as it can be projected to 1985.

The basic conclusion of the assessment, on which proposals for national and international action before the Conference are based, is that, while there are reasonable prospects for a balance between world demand and supply of foodgrains by 1985, this would be based essentially on the productive capacity of the developed countries. However, if current trends were to continue, the import requirements of the developing countries would by then be of the order of 80 to 90 million tons a year. This is regarded as an unmanageable situation on virtually any assumption about the prospective capacity of the developing countries to pay for imports of foodgrains of that order of magnitude.

The major emphasis of the Conference, therefore, is likely to be on proposals to increase the capacity of the developing countries to produce food. The Conference will also, however, address itself to the problem of

increasing world food security, through an improved early-warning system and a co-ordinated approach to stockholding, and to the continued need for food aid to deal with emergency situations and to alleviate nutritional deficiencies in developing countries particularly among vulnerable groups.

These are the main themes identified by the Secretary General of the Conference and by the Preparatory Committee of the World Food Conference during the three sessions it has held during the current year.

The main work of the Conference is likely to find expression in ten draft resolutions which are being submitted for the consideration of participating governments. What follows is a brief outline of the substance of each resolution:

1. Objectives for food production

The resolution urges all governments to accept the elimination of hunger and malnutrition as a serious international responsibility; it calls on the developing countries to accord priority to agriculture in their policies and to formulate food production objectives; it also appeals to donor countries and the international agencies to provide needed external support.

2. Priorities for Agricultural and Rural Development

The resolution stresses the need for far-reaching reforms and institutional changes in rural areas so as to involve the rural population more closely in rural development activity; it expresses the view that this should also be one of the criteria for making external assistance to rural development more effective.

3. Fertilizers

The resolution addresses itself to the fertilizer problem in all its aspects: easing of physical shortages; concessional financing for fertilizer imports; improvement of efficiency of plant operations in developing countries; financial and technical support for the construction of new fertilizer capacity; possible joint ventures between oil exporting countries, established fertilizer producers and developing countries; and more efficient use of available fertilizers.

4. Agricultural Research and Training

The resolution calls for enlarged efforts by research institutions in developing countries and at the international level and for increased national and international expenditures on agricultural research.

5. Policies and Programmes to Improve Nutrition

The resolution is aimed at launching a systematic attack on hunger and malnutrition. It calls for efforts to determine the extent and degree of malnutrition among various rural and urban groups as a basis for adequate policies to cope with the problem. It specifically asks the international agencies concerned to draw up programmes (a) to provide, as an initial target, supplementary food to at least one quarter of the number of children estimated to be suffering from malnutrition; (b) to provide supplementary feeding to vulnerable and needy groups in a number of the least developed countries; and (c) to reduce substantially some of the main specific nutritional deficiencies within a period of ten years.

6. Food Information System

The resolution seeks to establish a world-wide information system on food and agriculture involving the participation and co-operation of all governments and of the international agencies and organizations concerned (primarily FAO, WMO and the International Wheat Council).

7. World Food Security

The Director-General of FAO has proposed the adoption of an International Undertaking on World Food Security. The central feature of that proposal is that countries should undertake to adopt, on a voluntary basis, national stockholding policies which, in combination, would maintain at least a minimum safe level of basic foodstocks, principally cereals, for the world as a whole. The resolution is intended to place the Conference's seal of approval on the concept of the Undertaking and to urge its early implementation through negotiations in the appropriate international fora.

8. Long-term Policy for Food Aid

The resolution seeks to establish the following as the main elements of a long-term policy: a three-year basis for forward commitments; a target of at least 10 million tons of grains for food aid a year; the provision of other commodities for food aid purposes; the channelling of an agreed minimum share of food aid allocations through the World Food Programme; a progressive increase in the grant component of bilateral food aid programmes; more effective food aid co-ordination; and an international policy for emergency stocks.

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9. Stabilization of Food Prices and Markets

The resolution, affirming the importance of achieving greater market stability, calls on governments to formulate effective arrangements to that end in the appropriate international fora.

10. International Trade and Adjustment

The resolution looks to the achievement, through the efforts of UNCTAD and in the context of the GATT Multi-lateral Trade Negotiations, of more satisfactory trading terms for the developing countries, with particular reference to trade in food and food products. It also reaffirms the importance of international agricultural adjustment and the need for greater consistency in governmental policies bearing on future changes in food and agriculture.

Between them, these resolutions form an approach to a world food strategy.

Canada approaches the Conference from the position of a major world exporter of food and a country which is deeply concerned about the position of the developing countries, in particular, in the face of a tight world food supply situation and higher prices for food and energy. The Canadian Government is reviewing its food aid policies to assess their adequacy in the present situation. But Canada also recognizes the need for new and concerted efforts to allocate a higher priority to the production of food and, in particular, to bring about conditions in which the developing countries can, over time, meet a greater proportion of their food needs from domestic production. The Canadian Government is re-assessing its development assistance programmes to see what adjustments may be needed in the transfer of Canadian goods and

services to enable our programmes to help alleviate the world food problem. The Canadian Government is also studying, along with other members of FAO, how best it can contribute to increased world food security.

The Canadian Government accepts the need for greater external support for investment in food production in the developing countries and is ready to play its full part in an international effort in that direction which will complement the greater emphasis developing countries themselves recognize that they will need to place on food production. Canada believes that existing financial institutions are likely to provide the most effective channel for additional resource flows but is ready to study new mechanisms if it appears that these offer greater promise of attracting the participation of new and traditional donors.

The Canadian Government regards it as essential not only to formulate a world food strategy but to devise effective means for monitoring its progress and for co-ordinating the flow of resources, both bilateral and multi-lateral, that will be needed to underpin it. The Canadian Government believes that the best means of providing for follow-up action is by strengthening and, if necessary, reshaping existing institutions and by providing effective mechanisms for the co-ordination of their work.

The Government has designated Miss Margaret Meagher, until recently a senior Ambassador in the Canadian Foreign Service, to discuss the World Food Conference and Canada's part in it with the provincial governments and Canadian non-governmental organizations. Miss Meagher will be a

member of the Canadian delegation and will be responsible in Rome for continuing liaison with representatives of the non-governmental organizations. As the delegation list indicates, there will be direct provincial representation on the delegation and parliamentary observers are being designated by their respective parties.