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CANADA-GABONESE BILATERAL COMMISSION
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At the invitation of the Canadian government, His Excellency Mr. Martin Bongo, Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for the Gabonese Republic, paid an official visit to Canada November 29 - December 2, 1983.

During his visit, the second session of the Canada-Gabonese Bilateral Commission took place in Ottawa November 30 - December 1, 1983.

The Canadian delegation was chaired by the Honourable Jean-Luc Pepin, Minister for External Relations.

The Gabonese delegation, which on this occasion was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, included, among others:

- His Excellency Divungi-Di-NDingue, Minister of Energy and Water Resources
- His Excellency Mamadou Diop, Secretary of State to the Minister of Economy and Finance

As well as Ottawa, the Gabonese Minister and his delegation visited Toronto, where they received a warm welcome from government officials. They were received on Friday, December 2, in Montreal by officials of the government of Quebec.

Mr. Bongo met with the Honourable Pierre De Bané, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, with the Honourable Serge Joyal, Secretary of State, and with officials of the Export Development Corporation (EDC).

In their messages delivered at the beginning of the proceedings, Ministers Bongo and Pepin had words of praise for the bonds of friendship and cooperation between their two countries and were pleased to see this meeting of the Bilateral Commission being held in Ottawa. The Commission provides a framework for reflecting on, planning, coordinating and intensifying the bilateral relationship. It was formed during a working visit to Canada in October, 1980.

The two Ministers had a wide exchange of views on current major problems and on questions of bilateral cooperation.

They discussed the international political situation, with particular emphasis on Africa, and reiterated their strong support for rapid independence for Namibia, in accordance with UN Resolution 435 (78).

Mr. Bongo expressed the support of the Gabonese government for the peace initiative undertaken by Prime Minister Trudeau.

Mr. Pepin congratulated the Gabonese government on its efforts to consolidate its economic development.

The two sides then conducted an extensive review of the economic situation in both countries. They examined priority areas of cooperation and possible ways of enriching it.

Regarding the world economic situation, the Ministers expressed their conviction that only through increased international economic cooperation, such as that being pursued by their two countries, can there be a levelling of the present imbalance of incomes, which shows signs of worsening and further increasing the socio-economic inequalities between North and South.

On the subject of bilateral cooperation, the two sides paid particular attention to matters of trade, technical assistance and the implementation of concrete projects to further the economic and social development of Gabon.

The two sides examined ways of consolidating cooperation in the field of human resources, particularly training in education, health, energy and water resources, transportation, social affairs, culture, the arts and small and medium businesses.

They agreed to meet as soon as possible to discuss plans for such a program. The Canadian side agreed to provide to the Gabonese government specific funding for this aspect of technical assistance and multidisciplinary training.

CIDA stated that it was prepared to extend a line of credit for projects in the fields of rural development, energy and rural water supply.

The Canadian side also expressed its willingness to use selectively other mechanisms of cooperation, mainly institutional cooperation, industrial cooperation and the Mission-Administered Funds program of the Canadian Embassy in Libreville.

After noting the low level of trade between them and seeking ways and means of intensifying it, the two sides agreed in principle to organize in 1985 in Canada, economic sessions to promote direct contacts between Canadian and Gabonese businessmen, to identify projects in Gabon in the area of small and medium businesses and to create in Canada a commercial office for the Gabonese Centre for Foreign Trade.

Both sides were pleased with the climate of friendship and mutual understanding that prevailed throughout their discussions, testimony to the excellent relations between Prime Minister Trudeau and President Bongo and between the peoples of the two countries.

At the close of his visit, Mr. Bongo expressed his gratitude to Mr. Pepin and the Canadian government for the warm reception and the hospitality extended to him and to the Gabonese delegation.

At the end of the session, the two Ministers initialled a contract under which Tecsalt of Montreal will construct a new building for the Department of External Affairs in Libreville. EDC will finance the project.

The Ministers were present at the conclusion of an agreement for a technical training project that will include construction of a professional training centre and provision of teaching materials by Sofati of Montreal.

Mr. Bongo extended to his Canadian counterpart an invitation to pay an official visit to Gabon. The invitation was accepted.

The two sides agreed to hold the third session of the Bilateral Commission in 1985, in the Gabonese Republic.