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# STATEMENT DISCOURS



STATEMENT MADE BY THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
THE HONOURABLE  
ALLAN J. MACEachEN,  
AT A DINNER GIVEN BY  
DR. OKOI ARIKPO,  
NIGERIAN COMMISSIONER  
FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
LAGOS, APRIL 15, 1975 12

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests,

I am very grateful to the Government of Nigeria for an invitation which gave me the opportunity to make my first official visit to Africa in Lagos, the capital of your country. The most stimulating discussions we had this morning, Dr. Arikpo, as well as at my meeting later in the afternoon with your colleague, the Commissioner for Mines and Power, Alhaji S. Ali Monguno, have very much met the goals we had set for ourselves before coming here.

I believe we have laid the foundation for much closer co-operation between Nigeria and Canada in the United Nations and other international arenas, where our governments pursue very similar objectives. You also confirmed that the Government of Nigeria is as convinced as we are that we must expand and intensify bilateral relations in all fields between our two countries; trade, technical and industrial co-operation, of course, but also human contacts and cultural exchanges, for our two peoples have much to learn from each other. I was gratified to learn that you share our feeling that political consultations between our two governments must become more regular and cover a wider range of international issues and mutual interests.

I hope that our discussions have opened a further phase in the relationship between Nigeria and Canada. This relationship started very soon after your country's accession to independence. It has been a warm and a close relationship, both exemplified and strengthened by the personal friendship between your distinguished Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, and Prime Minister Trudeau. During those years we have discovered that, although separated by climate, culture and the Atlantic Ocean, Nigeria and Canada have much more in common than appears at first glance. A few days before I left Ottawa, a spring storm brought down ten inches of snow to prolong our interminable winter; so that indeed the balmy clime and luxuriant vegetation that we found in Lagos is a welcome change. But underneath this exotic environment, we have found in Nigeria a remarkable social experience to which Canadians can readily relate because it is very close to their own.

You are a very old people with a glorious past and timeless traditions; but you are also a young country, striving to build a solid national framework for the social and economic betterment of all Nigerians. The people of Canada are much younger and, although their national state has been in existence for somewhat longer than yours, they are still adapting their political system to their varied needs. Canadians have forged, over the years, a motto to describe their own social experience: Unity in Diversity. I understand that the Nigerian motto is very similar: One Nation.

As you know, Mr. Commissioner, Canada, like Nigeria, is a bilingual and multicultural country, with a very large territory and therefore many distinct provinces and regions. The Government of Canada is firmly convinced that all these language groups, provinces or regions, must continue to enhance their own identity within the framework of the Canadian federal system. There again, our two countries have much in common, for your government is also dedicated, Mr. Commissioner, to unity and faith within the Nigerian national framework.

Through the years, Canadians have also found much to agree with and support in the foreign policy for which you are responsible, be it at the United Nations, in the Commonwealth or within the several African institutions where Nigeria plays a leading role. You have stated your goals and principles firmly, but you have strived to achieve or implement them in a flexible and pragmatic fashion, mindful of the constraints of action and respectful of international law and the rights of other countries. Our two leaders will have once again an opportunity to act in concert at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, at the end of the month. In your own West Africa you have patiently built bridges between the English and French speaking countries established after the colonial period and attempted to reinstate in a contemporary mould the co-operation that was traditional between the peoples of the area. In this respect, I was pleased to learn that your long-standing efforts to establish a West African economic community are now very close to fruition.

As you know, Mr. Commissioner, the Government of Canada has begun some time ago to adapt its foreign policy to a new set of realities and conditions. Some of these realities are internal to our own society; Canadians have become more conscious, in recent years, of their own national identity and of the need to project it more forcefully on the world scene. But we also have become very much aware of the changes which are under way in the international environment. The most significant of these changes, perhaps, is the rapid emergence of developing countries in the concert of nations.

The dramatic political initiatives taken recently by the third world at the United Nations and its agencies, particularly their call for a new economic order, may have taken some by surprise; but in fact, they are an integral part of the historical movement triggered by decolonization and the accession to independence of African and Asian peoples.

Although we support the efforts of third world countries to accelerate their development and bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth in the world, we have been somewhat concerned by the strains which some of these initiatives have placed upon international institutions:

not so much because we seek to preserve within these organizations the power of the industrialized minority, but because we want to maintain and even improve their effectiveness for the resolution of international conflicts, be they military, political or economic in nature.

The Government of Canada also feels that we must go beyond declarations and statements of principles and search for practical solutions to the very real problems raised by the third world. A long-drawn confrontation between developing and industrialized countries would be sterile and fraught with danger. We feel that a strategy of accommodation and negotiation would be in the best interest of all; and I believe that, in many respects, the Government of Nigeria shares our feeling.

This is very much what brings me to Africa. We want the next special session of the United Nations on development to succeed, that is, to lead to concrete results.

Accordingly, the Government of Canada has recently established an inter-departmental committee to review the full range of our economic relations with developing countries and to identify the possible areas where changes can be gradually introduced to establish a more balanced relationship between ourselves and other industrialized countries, and the third world. But we felt that technical studies were not enough, that we had to consult with developing countries and especially with those like Nigeria which have become, in recent years, quite as important for us as some of our more traditional friends and partners on the international scene.

However, we Canadians feel that we must not be content with action at the multilateral level. We also hope to strengthen our bilateral relations with the countries of the third world. We have tried, in the past, to co-operate with them through economic and technical assistance. But we feel that we must go now beyond this form of co-operation to expand trade, engage in mutually beneficial investments and industrial co-operation as well as cultural exchanges, and forge new links in all areas of human endeavour. We hope that this approach will be beneficial to developing countries, but I tell you quite frankly, Mr. Commissioner, that we expect it also to be in our own national interest.

The strengthening of our relationship with Nigeria and other African countries is an important element of our policy of diversification of external relations, alongside with the forging of new links with Europe, Japan and the maintenance of a harmonious and balanced relationship with the U.S.A. In fact, Canada's foreign policy has become universal and is now seeking new partnerships in all directions.

This visit to Africa also provides me with an opportunity to renew Canada's commitment to share her wealth with developing countries and to adapt her international development policy to the changing needs of developing countries. In this respect, Nigeria has set a remarkable example for us. Your government, Mr. Commissioner, has sought to use its new-found wealth for the social and economic betterment of your people; but you have also accepted in a wholly admirable way to share some of that wealth with other countries. I would like to pay tribute to the spirit of international co-operation that has inspired your recent contributions to the African Development Bank, to the International Monetary Fund Oil Facility for Developing Countries and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

It is in the same spirit that Canada will try to adapt its own international development co-operation to the new priorities set out by your government, in the Third National Development Plan recently launched by His Excellency General Gowon. We hope to contribute to the implementation of this plan. We will look carefully at the priorities set out in it and ensure that the new guidelines which we are now preparing for the Canadian International Development Agency will be in harmony with Nigerian priorities. We also took good note, during our meetings of the fact that Nigeria now needs essentially skilled manpower and technical training to accelerate her development; and I assure you that Canada's response will be a positive one.

I know, in particular, that your government attaches the utmost importance to the Universal Primary Education Programme. We hope to be of some assistance in the planning of this ambitious endeavour, if only because some of our own Canadian provinces have accumulated considerable expertise in this field through the planned expansion of their own education systems in recent years.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, I invite you to raise your glass to the health of the Nigerian Head of State, His Excellency General Gowon, to the prosperity of the Nigerian people, to the future of Nigeria, and to still closer and friendly relations between our two countries.