

Statement

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SPEECH BY

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Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Cochairmen, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me say at the outset that Canada welcomes the decision by France to convene this conference, as it has welcomed Indonesian initiatives to prompt a settlement in Cambodia. For its part Canada takes very seriously the responsibilities of participating in this meeting. I pledge to you, and to all participants, our active and constructive support.

The task we have undertaken under the guidance of our cochairmen is an awesome one, where the consequences of either success or failure will be great indeed. Can we finally end nearly 50 years of upheaval, war and enormous human suffering in Indochina, and make that area a partner in South East Asian progress? Can we help to close one of the darkest chapters of Cambodian history and open a new chapter of self determination, national reconciliation, respect for human rights and reconstruction? Can the bitter legacy of distrust be dispelled and progressively replaced by a climate of hope and confidence?

Certainly the international context provides scope for optimism. The last several years have witnessed an extraordinary transformation in the international climate. At the centre of this transformation has been the rapprochement between the two superpowers and real progress in ending the arms race.

But equally there have been signs that other long standing and destabilizing confrontations are now fading. In Asia the recent progress toward normalization of relations between the USSR and China, and the growing dialogue between other former adversaries in the region, are most welcome developments. Perhaps we have, as nation-states, belatedly come to recognize that the use of force to resolve differences or impose solutions in the end involves not only failure and great tragedy but insupportable costs to all concerned.

These warmer political winds that have started to blow have brought with them another very welcome change. For much of its life the United Nations has been prevented from doing its job of promoting the safer and more humane world foreseen in the Charter. Today we see the major powers working together to use the UN effectively, whether in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in Southern Africa and perhaps, in the future, Central America. In Canada, we take great satisfaction in this development. It bears out our consistent belief in, and support for, the UN and its goals, not for reasons of idealism but because of a hard-headed calculation that the UN can and does work. It also confirms our strong conviction that the UN as an institution must play a central role in any Cambodian solution. There is another reason to believe that new attitudes can prevail as we seek peace in Cambodia. Much of South East Asia is today a zone of hope,

and increasingly of remarkable prosperity. The countries of ASEAN cooperate on every level and have become key international players collectively and individually. Indeed the South East Asia region, always rich in human and material resources, has emerged as a major centre of global endeavour and achievement. It is surely time to associate Indochina as a whole with this remarkable success story, and to allow the talents and resources of the Indo Chinese countries to strengthen South East Asia success.

Our hopes and aspirations for a better future for Cambodia cannot blind us to reality. Unfortunately there are also reasons, if not for pessimism, then at least for very sober realism. The situation in Cambodia is extraordinarily complex and marked by very deep divisions, mistrust and fear. Overcoming these problems will not be easy and sadly could be impossible unless the Cambodian parties are prepared and able to find ways to bridge their differences. The results of the discussions among the parties that preceded this conference have not been at all reassuring in this respect, beyond the welcome symbolism that my neighbours the Cambodians are sitting together at our table.

For its part Canada believes that we must have some fixed points to our compass as we set out on these troubled waters.

First, Canada believes this conference must be the venue for a comprehensive settlement, covering internal as well as external elements and allowing for genuine democratic elections. The external and internal aspects of this problem are in our view inseparable. To proceed otherwise would be to fail. It would condemn Cambodians to further bloodshed and enmity, doom those who try to help them to endless frustration and possibly real risk, invite renewed outside intervention, and prolong regional instability.

Such an outcome would betray the better future we all seek for Cambodia and for the region generally. Frankly, I do not see how the work of this conference with respect to international endorsement and support for a settlement can be fulfilled unless the Cambodian parties arrive at a viable settlement in very short order. Planning for the one depends crucially on the realization of the other. We believe the conference must find a way to encourage early agreement among the parties and to make sure their work can appropriately inform discussions on external aspects.

Second, outside intervention in Cambodia must end completely. In that context we welcome assurances that all Vietnamese forces will withdraw from Cambodia. What is also required however is that the Cambodian parties and other participants have confidence that this assurance will be completely honoured. We therefore strongly urge the putting in place of effective verification procedures that will reassure others on this point. Equally, outside military support to the Cambodian parties must also cease. This, too, must be verified to the satisfaction of all sides.

Third, there must under no circumstances be a repetition of the genocide and truly terrible abuses of human rights perpetrated in the name of ideology that devastated Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. Those ultimately responsible for ordering these abuses can never again be allowed to direct Cambodian affairs. The onus is upon their associates - indeed it is upon all parties - to show in whatever arrangements are agreed by Cambodian parties that they will cooperate in a new order in Cambodia where human rights are fully respected.

As a country with very extensive experience in truce supervision and peacekeeping, including nineteen years in Indochina, Canada has another central preoccupation. An international control mechanism will be a key element not only in a comprehensive agreement, but also in building confidence that it is honoured by all concerned. Our earlier experience in Indochina has taught us what will not work; our experience in over 20 peacekeeping operations elsewhere gives us an appreciation of what does make for success. The mechanism should enjoy the full support and cooperation of all parties, it should have a clear mandate including the necessary freedom of action and movement, it should be charged with reporting responsibilities to a recognized international authority, it should be established on a viable financial basis, and it should be of a limited duration.

These criteria are not technical niceties; they go to the very heart of the ability of the mission to carry out its mandate and are absolutely central to the progress of creating the trust and confidence which must underlie a successful settlement. If they are overlooked or set aside the result is likely to be an international control mechanism that will only compound the already severe difficulties the Cambodian Parties face in implementing a viable agreement.

In this context, we believe the United Nations is, without question, the proper instrument for whatever role or roles an international mechanism is required. No other organization commands the same authority in providing guarantees. No other organization has the necessary machinery in place to move quickly to implement agreements once they are reached. No other organization spans as effectively the interlinked security, humanitarian and economic agenda of this conference. We are aware that other options have been proposed, such as the creation of a control commission. In our experience those are highly imperfect instruments, especially if they do not have an appropriate reporting authority or an integrated mission structure. We know these views are widely shared among participants.

We also know that several participants have, up to now, expressed reservations about the UN on the basis of both Cambodian representation in the General Assembly and the annual resolution on Cambodia. Those problems will surely fall away if an internal settlement is reached. If there is no internal settlement, an international control mechanism will be of little value. We therefore urge those participants to look to the future rather than to the past. Early consensus that the UN as an institution must play a central role would give real momentum to this conference and significantly increase the chance of its success. It would also allow the UN to accelerate preparations, including undertaking a technical survey to Cambodia that would let us get an operation up and running quickly in the event of a comprehensive agreement. This is vital in view of the daunting infrastructure, resource, medical geographic and other challenges that will have to be faced in Cambodia, challenges probably only equalled by those faced by the UN in the Congo.

Earlier this year I said, and today I confirm, that if a comprehensive settlement can be reached, Canada will consider any request from the conference to participate in an international control mechanism. In making our decision we will be guided by the criteria to which I have alluded earlier. It will also be clear from what I have said that a decision in favour of a UN force would greatly reassure us.

This conference will address two other questions of central importance to a settlement in Cambodia; those of refugee resettlement and of reconstruction. Canada will participate in both discussions with attention and sympathy. Canadians are deeply aware of the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons who have been living in camps outside of Cambodia for many years. We have welcomed 130,000 Indochinese refugees in Canada over the past decade of whom some 20,000 have been Cambodians.

The time is now long overdue to reach an agreement that will permit the closing of the camps and the return of their inhabitants to their livelihoods and homes in Cambodia. This should be done at the earliest time, consistent with the safety of the people concerned. Canada is prepared to provide reintegration assistance to those who choose to return under a multilateral effort led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. If peace does return to Cambodia, we will also look for new opportunities to facilitate family reunification and family visits for Cambodians in Canada.

As to reconstruction, few countries have been as badly devastated by war and ideology as Cambodia. If we are able to achieve a comprehensive and viable agreement, it should be followed by a carefully coordinated international effort to restore a healthy economy and improve social conditions in Cambodia. Canada has given aid to Cambodia in the past, and is willing to consider doing so again in the future. We are prepared to examine all possible ways to determine which are the most effective, and look forward to work at the Conference on this subject. We have long recognized that economic and social development are closely tied to peace and security. Nowhere is this more true than in Cambodia.

Cochairmen, Colleagues, Canada joins with all others in this room in earnestly hoping that the long search for lasting peace in Cambodia will at last be successful. But this will not be the case if, in our anxiety to achieve some result, we agree on a partial or faulty arrangement. We must work soundly as well as quickly. There can be no winners except the Cambodian people themselves, no losers except those who have shown contempt for human rights. Thank you.