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SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE  
HONOURABLE ALLAN J. MACEachEN,  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, TO THE  
CANADA/EUROPE CONFERENCE  
ON ACID RAIN.

OTTAWA

MARCH 20, 1984

It is my pleasure to welcome to Ottawa ministers and officials responsible for environmental matters in nine nations and the ten Canadian provinces. I am delighted as well as to see as special guests representatives of the Commission of the European Communities, the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe, the World Health and Meteorological Organizations, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. I welcome too several members of non-government organizations (and the media of many countries). We are here to examine an issue of world importance, the vital issue of acid rain.

It is gratifying to see a growing rekindling of the spirit of Stockholm of 1972, when the whole world dedicated itself to environmental renewal. That spirit has been battered for a time: recession, unemployment and austerity have resulted in preoccupation with the past and the present at the expense of the future.

However, your presence at this conference affirms the commitment of your countries to take action not only to protect your own environments but also those of friends and neighbours. You understand that the environment is indivisible and does not respect geographic boundaries. The well-being of this and subsequent generations depends on decisions taken now, while the problem is serious but manageable.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the North American situation where Canada and the USA need to work together to resolve a joint problem. Fully half the wet sulphate deposition in Canada is of US origin and we contribute about one tenth to the US problem. Unfortunately the decisions about who will pay the costs of the cleanup are not easy ones, and the US Administration has decided, at least for the foreseeable future, not to join us in a joint programme of emission controls.

We in Canada do not believe we have the time to wait. On March 6 the Canadian and provincial governments agreed to proceed with a reinforced sulphur dioxide abatement program moving from 25% commitment to a 50% reduction in emissions by 1994. These additional measures will reduce the areas being damaged in Canada.

Regrettably, the transboundary nature of the problem means that many areas would remain inadequately protected even if we were to cease emissions altogether, until the United States takes similar action. We cannot reverse the acidification and destruction of our lakes and forests single-handedly. International cooperation is not just an ideal, it is an indispensable and mountingy urgent necessity. I will be presenting this view to Mr. Shultz when I meet him in Washington in April.

We must continue also to support and give impetus to the sometimes tentative but always creditable cooperation achieved in international organizations. I am delighted to see the representative from the Economic Commission for Europe, Mr. Clemente Lopez-Polo, for it was in the ECE that this spirit of cooperation created the Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution Agreement which this conference has as its base. I salute as well the work of the OECD and of UNEP.

All major nations of this world signed the Stockholm Declaration. We proclaimed in this declaration that we all have, and I quote, "the responsibility to ensure that activities within our jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states" unquote.

Our task here, as at Munich in June, is to affirm before the world our commitment to this principle, and to urge other nations to join us in this reaffirmation.

This commitment we speak of is to something much more than mere scientific or technical understanding of the problems. It is part of a much greater commitment to the advance of civilized behaviour, to the comity of nations itself.

The challenge for us is to exercise leadership in pursuit of economic development in a manner that demonstrates responsibility for stewardship of the environment - the maintenance of environmental health is not an obstacle to development but an integral part of economic life.

Best wishes for your deliberations.