



Statements and Speeches

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PLEA FOR TRUE SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS IN KAMPUCHEA

A Statement by Louis Duclos, Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the United Nations Conference on Kampuchean Relief, Geneva, May 27, 1980

The tragic situation of the people of Kampuchea, a situation of death, famine, suffering and dispersal of family, has led the international community once again to consider how it must unite its efforts to relieve the disastrous conditions which continue to ravage this area of the world. Ten years of war, revolution, foreign invasion and occupation have changed a once prosperous country into a land where most essential economic and social structures have broken down completely, where the very existence of an entire people is threatened and where food shortages bordering on famine and the almost complete lack of consumer goods have become everyday reality.

This tragedy and suffering have deeply affected the Canadian people and it is with the massive support of its population that the Canadian Government has been working for almost two years to contribute what it can to the relief operation organized by the international community. Our response has taken a number of forms. Canada has contributed \$15 million directly to the programs of the chief international organization engaged in Kampuchea relief. It has also made indirect contributions through significant support of the assistance and rehabilitation projects undertaken by Canadian non-governmental organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross, the Mennonite Central Committee, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Canadian University Services Overseas, World Vision of Canada and a number of other non-governmental organizations.

However, throughout its history, Canada has maintained a policy of welcome for displaced persons and refugees. On the strength of tradition, we opened our doors to the Indochinese refugees. The program set up accordingly was indisputably the most ambitious in our history. Before the end of this year, 60,000 Indochinese refugees will have resettled in Canada; taking into account the size of our population this places us first among the host countries. It is evident that this venture was made possible not only through the direct political and financial intervention of the Federal Government, but also, and to a significant degree, through the generous response of groups and individuals, religious and charitable organizations and provincial and municipal governments. In any case, this unprecedented effort represents a costly financial commitment. When, before the end of this year, Canada has received the 60,000 Indochinese refugees it has undertaken to receive, some \$125 million will have been disbursed for this purpose alone by the Canadian Federal Government. Several millions of dollars more will have been spent by the provincial and municipal governments and by the private sector.

This is the third time we have met to seek together the best means for assisting the

population of Southeast Asia. Thanks to the efforts put forth, in particular by a number of the neighbouring countries, the worst has not happened. In this regard, allow me to pay special tribute to the Government of Thailand which, through its policy of welcome, is continuing to give other countries of the world an admirable example of human solidarity. Our gratitude and admiration also go out to the United Nations agencies and to the International Committee of the Red Cross for the incomparable work they are carrying out. With that said, we are all aware that there is a great deal to be done. How could we ignore the desperate plight of millions of Kampuchean — those still in Kampuchea — as well as those who have fled to Thailand or to the temporary encampments along the border?

We have never underestimated the complexities and difficulties of the relief operation to be undertaken. Despite the efforts of all participants, blockages in the distribution system and deliberate diversions of foodstuffs are still being reported. While substantial improvements have been made, as reported by the Interagency Working Group, nonetheless numerous components of the distribution system will have to be reinforced and developed if we wish to reach the objectives set out for the rest of the year. We were encouraged to note that the new harbour facilities have been made available to the agencies, that more trucks, barges and tugs have been brought into operation and that vehicle maintenance programs have been set up. We are also glad that the Phnom Penh authorities have authorized an increase in the number of relief personnel in Kampuchea.

However, all the efforts, both multilateral and bilateral, will have to be increased considerably if the approximately 35,000 metric tons of food required each month are to reach their destination. When we realize that only 69,000 tons have reached Kampuchea since last autumn, it is easy to see the enormity of the task remaining to be carried out.

We are pleased that the excellent report by Sir Robert Jackson, as well as the statements of numerous delegates who have preceded me, have provided a whole range of practical suggestions for getting closer to our objective, if all parties are willing to lend their co-operation. We therefore give our fullest support to the many suggestions made for improving the supply lines to the Kampuchean people, whether by land, sea or air, so that international relief will finally reach the most deprived civilians, in particular in those provinces where the needs are most urgent. It is only through such a gradual re-establishment of the conditions of normal existence that hundreds of thousands of Kampuchean, currently in exile, will return voluntarily to their homeland — the only viable long-term solution.

It is sad to see that around the world there are numerous situations where hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to abandon their homes and seek asylum in neighbouring countries. The case of Kampuchea is not unique but its scope is such that it merits special attention. Seldom has the world seen a nation's very existence threatened in such a way. Certainly, we must meet the most pressing humanitarian needs immediately. But we cannot and must not postpone indefinitely a study of the fundamental causes of this unprecedented disaster, that is, the blatant attacks on the rights of people and the systematic denial of the most basic human rights. Above all

beyond humanitarian relief, we must address the problems which have caused the current instability. The vast majority of United Nations member states supported a resolution of the General Assembly identifying the principles which alone can lead to a true solution to the Kampuchean crisis, in particular the absolute necessity of a complete withdrawal of foreign armed forces. Essentially, the solution can only be found in earnest negotiations among all the parties concerned. We must therefore appeal to all parties to assume their responsibilities and to acknowledge without delay that it is in their own best interests to arrive at a consensus which will ensure peace and prosperity, in full respect of human rights, to the entire region. Only along these lines will there be a promise of better days ahead for all Kampuchean.