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Notes for remarks by
the Right Honourable
Joe Clark, Secretary of
State for External Affairs,
on the occasion of the opening
dinner of Canada-Malaysia
Conference

OTTAWA

October 7, 1986.

Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you here this evening on the occasion of the opening of this Canada-Malaysia Conference. The list of participants is remarkable, in that it brings together a host of distinguished representatives of government, business and the academic community from both countries. We are especially honoured, Excellency, that you have found it possible to come to Canada at this time. I know that you have had to make significant adjustments to your own schedule, both official and personal, in order to accommodate the visit, and I deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness. In our earlier discussion, you recalled that you had, in your previous portfolio, visited Canada last year to attend the International Congress on Alcoholism and Drugs in Calgary. You are therefore no stranger to Canada and to our views on at least one important issue. I hope you will also find your first visit to Canada as Foreign Minister to be both useful and enjoyable. I can think of no more appropriate occasion for your return, from our point of view, than this unique conference.

Over the two years since this government came into office and I assumed my duties as Secretary of State for External Affairs, we have increasingly recognized the importance to Canada of the Asian Pacific area. I have travelled to Asia four times in that period, including attendance at two meetings of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers. The first of these, of course, was in Kuala Lumpur, where I enjoyed a warm welcome from your predecessor and a superb programme which included a most refreshing trip to Fraser's Hill. I was grateful for the excellent hospitality extended to me by your government.

Ten years ago, Canada's trans-Pacific immigration surpassed our trans-Atlantic immigration, for the first time in history. As a Canadian from the western region of Canada, I have always been aware of the immense importance and the immense potential of our neighbours across the Pacific. That understanding, which is second nature in western Canada, has now spread across our country.

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For 100 years, we have been a Pacific nation in geography. Now we are a Pacific nation in mentality, looking to a partnership across your, and my, ocean as the major source of new economic opportunity for Canada in the decade to come.

Just two years ago, Canada's Pacific trade surpassed its Atlantic trade. Trade, Investment and Economic Cooperation continue to expand more rapidly in the Pacific than in any other area, and bilateral contacts between Canada and the Asian Pacific nations have, accordingly, accelerated. For the nations that constitute ASEAN, we, as a dialogue partner, have not only seen a rapid growth in our bilateral relations, but also increasingly frequent opportunities for consultations on international issues of common interest. Canada ascribes great importance to ASEAN, and to what it has been able to achieve in terms of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia. In addition to our annual participation in the Post Ministerial Committee, we have yearly consultations among officials, and a variety of contacts in the areas of science and technology, trade and economic development. Last month in Vancouver, we hosted a highly successful Canada/ASEAN Forum, an opportunity for 50 top business leaders, 25 from ASEAN and 25 from Canada, to come together to discuss cooperative ventures in the oil and gas, telecommunications and minerals sectors.

We share with Malaysia, and with ASEAN, a deep concern about the future of the world trading system, at a time when the pressures for protectionism are growing daily. The recent meeting of Ministers of the GATT countries in Punta del Este, Uruguay brought us closer to a new round of multilateral trade negotiations. I was pleased to meet your distinguished colleague, Tunku Razaleigh Hamzah. Canada and the ASEAN countries worked together closely in the preparations for the Punta de Este meeting, and at that meeting itself. Through continued consultation and cooperation, I am confident that we can, together, exert a strong influence on the process leading to reductions of international trade barriers.

There are, of course, innumerable examples of areas of interest which Canada and Malaysia have in common. We are members of the Commonwealth, which is proving its worth as a vehicle for trying to solve some of the world's more intractable problems. We look forward to hosting Prime Minister Mahathir and other Commonwealth Heads of Government next fall in Vancouver. As democratic nations and free societies, Canada and Malaysia place a very high value on the observance of basic human rights, the abuse of which is

inherent in the system of apartheid in South Africa. I was therefore moved by the strong statement of principle delivered on this question by Prime Minister Mahatir in the current UN General Assembly.

Excellency, this Conference will deal primarily with bilateral relations between our two countries, against a background of domestic policies, cultural realities and foreign policy considerations which affect those relations, especially in economic terms. I expect, given the traditional openness which characterizes our relations, that the discussions of the next three days will be frank and substantive. No apologies need be made if, in addition to the positive factors in the relationship, the problem areas are identified as well, and thoroughly aired. The outcome, I am sure, will be a deeper understanding of each by the other and, I trust, it will have a positive catalytic effect on our future relations.

Excellency, I realize that you are new to the portfolio of Foreign Minister, but I should point out to our guests that you have already served your country in a number of senior capacities since entering political life in 1974; as a Member of Parliament, as Chief Minister of your home state and in the Cabinet posts of Land and Regional Development, and of Information. You therefore bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to your present position, which I am confident you will fill with distinction.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour and pleasure to introduce to you our keynote speaker for this Canada-Malaysia Conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, His Excellency Dato Rais Yatim.