



Statements and Speeches

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THE SITUATION IN KAMPUCHEA

A Statement by Mr. Douglas Roche, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and Representative of Canada to the Thirty-fourth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, November 14, 1979

Canada takes the floor in this debate as a country which has had a long involvement in supervisory mechanisms established as a result of various attempts by the international community to restore peace and stability in Indochina. It is therefore with concern that we have watched the developments in Kampuchea over the past years; we have a deep sympathy for the plight of the people of that country. When the war in Vietnam ended, many of us were able, after the decades of strife Indochina had seen, to hope that peace was at hand. However, hope gave way to horror.

Canadians have followed the situation in Kampuchea with extreme concern. We have felt revulsion at the stories of the tragic suffering of the people. As these stories have gradually emerged they have become not vague images but vivid reality. Incalculable numbers of people have died from the conflict and from famine. The promise of Kampuchea's future has been dimmed by the deaths of educators, doctors, skilled workers and managers, and most sadly, virtually a generation of children.

The people's appalling circumstances were only beginning to be made known to the world when their suffering was compounded by the aggression of a foreign power embroiling them in active conflict. Kampuchean have been forced to flee from their homes, to separate from their families and to face starvation and death.

Conditions continue to deteriorate. The pitiful few who have been able to reach refuge in Thailand tell of the decimation of the population through disease and famine. Villages have been sacked by troops — by regulars, guerrillas and deserters — water supplies have become contaminated, and people are reduced to eating seed grains and whatever else they can get by foraging. Children, the future of the nation, are dying by the thousands. The distended bellies and bewildered eyes of the infants tell of the horror of life and death inside Kampuchea. Canadians feel outrage at the enormity of this obscenity.

The Secretary-General should be congratulated for convening the Pledging Conference held November 5 for emergency humanitarian relief for the people of Kampuchea. The generosity of those who responded to the plea and pledged some \$210 million will mean that some lives are saved in the coming months.

Canada appeals to all parties to extend their co-operation to the humanitarian relief effort. The most recent reports of the aid effort speak in terms of a six-month period within which \$110-million worth of food, medical equipment and agricultural supplies should be distributed. The international community must recognize that this

effort, even if fully successful, can bring only a temporary halt to the deterioration of the situation for little more than half the population. Already relief for the second six-month period is being planned, but again the scope of the effort has severe limitations.

The deep concern Canadians feel about conditions inside Kampuchea is slowly changing its expression from anger to determination — that the realities of the situation be recognized by the international community and solutions sought.

The humanitarian relief effort and the handling of the refugee problem are only palliatives. If the longer term is to hold out prospects for the existence of a Kampuchean nation, the present problems of social and political organization must be addressed. We are assembled to discuss those questions, to evaluate alternatives and to take firm action towards their solutions.

The outstanding questions must include: a recognition of the role Vietnam is playing in Kampuchea; the relationship of the Kampuchean situation to the stability of the whole of Southeast Asia; an identification of the principles on which a solution to the situation should be based; and consideration of ways in which to bring about a lasting political solution.

We condemn unreservedly the genocide practised by the Pol Pot government. However, we do not accept the thesis that the invasion of Kampuchea was intended solely to deliver the country from tyranny. It appears clear that the purpose of the invasion was the establishment of a docile and subservient regime. Whatever Vietnam's motives may have been, they are construed by neighbouring countries and by most of the international community as an attempt to establish a dependent state on their border which will pay homage to Hanoi.

There are two specific points which might usefully be made at this juncture. One reason Vietnam has given for its actions against Kampuchea is that of border conflicts. If serious problems actually existed on the Vietnamese-Kampuchean border it would hardly be necessary to occupy the entire country to resolve them. Secondly, the claim in the resolution submitted by Vietnam that the people of Kampuchea invited Vietnamese intervention and that such action is in accordance with the Charter is at best a distortion of the intentions of the drafters of that document. Such a provision, if intended, would only be a prescription for turmoil and pretence for aggression. In any event, there is no evidence that the Kampuchean people asked for the intervention of foreign troops. Instead, the current situation argues for the view that Vietnam interfered in the internal affairs of Kampuchea, not to rescue the people from a manifestly abhorrent regime, but to satisfy a desire for the extension of its influence. Concern over Vietnam's long-term intentions provides an undesirable, destabilizing influence on the whole of Southeast Asia. The international community must recognize the desire of the nations of Southeast Asia for peace, freedom and neutrality. International influence must be brought to bear on those who would upset these desires.

In an attempt to secure the future of the Kampuchean people and the stability of

Southeast Asia, certain principles must be borne in mind which are recognized in Resolution A/34/L.13 which has been introduced by the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The resolution reaffirms the right of all peoples to determine their own future free from outside interference. It then emphasizes that all states should refrain, in their international relations, from the threat or use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or independence of any state and strictly adhere to the principles of peaceful settlement of disputes and of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

It is against these principles that we must measure the course of action designed to find a political solution to the long-term problems of Kampuchea and respond to the concerns of the states in Southeast Asia.

Accordingly, Canada has co-sponsored Resolution A/34/L.13 as providing the basis for the first tentative steps towards solution of these problems.

The resolution identifies elements of the current situation in Kampuchea: the threat to stability of Southeast Asia; regret for armed intervention; alarm at the potential of the conflict to spill over into neighbouring territories; distress at the refugee flow and the necessity for humanitarian relief.

The resolution then makes three points of paramount importance to the future of Kampuchea:

1. it calls upon parties to the conflict to cease hostilities forthwith;
2. it calls for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea; and,
3. it urges settlement by peaceful means.

Canada endorses these points which, if acted upon with the real co-operation of all parties, should be the first steps towards resolution of the problem in Kampuchea and the establishment of conditions under which the people of Kampuchea may be free to choose their own government. It is equally important to note that the resolution requests the Secretary-General to investigate the situation and to exercise his good offices in order to contribute to a peaceful solution to the problem.

Canada urges all member states to support Resolution A/34/L.13, for its focus is on the future, on co-operation and constructive action. We call upon all nations to support the Secretary-General and to use all influence at their disposal to ensure that the situation in Kampuchea does not end in greater tragedy.

We welcome the increasing co-operation extended by Vietnam and the Heng Samrin administration in the humanitarian relief effort and applaud the response of member states to the call for aid. In the final analysis, however, the plight of the Kampuchean people and the instability of Indochina will not be alleviated without political decisions and action. Whether galvanized by humanitarian concerns or political

realism, it is imperative that parties co-operate to find political solutions within the context of the principles enunciated in the resolution. We have before us a proposal for the first steps towards such solutions. We urge all member states to offer their full support.