

Statement

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
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SECRETARY OF STATE (ASIA-PACIFIC),
TO COMDEF '95

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I am very pleased to have this opportunity to talk with you today to outline my role as Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) and to discuss some of the ways in which we can work together to further our relationship with countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

First of all, my role as Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) is to advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Asia-Pacific matters. I also work very closely with our Minister for International Trade, helping him with our government's efforts to open up markets in Asia to Canadian business. My responsibilities, therefore, cover both geographic and sectoral issues, such as political and economic matters and social development assistance.

Earlier this year our government released its Statement on Foreign Policy entitled *Canada in the World*. In that statement, we outlined our guiding objectives: first, the promotion of prosperity and employment; second, the protection of security; and third, the promotion of our values and culture. We encounter issues in all three areas in Asia-Pacific and often they are tightly connected to one another. Some tend to see one element as being pursued at the expense of the other, but I see them as being pursued in harmony. Without the basic elements of good governance, rule of law, and human rights, there would be no long-term stability in individual countries or indeed, in the region. Today I would like to focus on the security aspects of our relationship.

The Asia-Pacific region is probably the one that has seen some of the most dramatic changes since World War II. Of course, there have been "headline" events - revolutions, military coups, insurgencies and civil wars - but there have also been very significant peaceful political evolutions such as decolonialization and constitutional reforms. Even more significant, there has been steady economic growth in almost all countries in the region, especially those countries in North Asia and Southeast Asia. Indeed, growth rates in much of the Asia-Pacific region during the 1980s were more than twice those of the rest of the world. Asia's share of the world income could rise from 24 per cent in 1989 to 35 per cent by 2010, and to over 50 per cent by 2040.

Hence, while it would be incorrect to argue that threats to security in Asia-Pacific are more serious now than they were during the Cold War, the scope of Canada's interests in the region is much wider than ever before.

The region is now dynamic but the environment remains uncertain. We cannot predict the outcome of generational changes in some Asia-Pacific countries or delve into the minds of those who will be shaping policy in China. We cannot predict with certainty what will happen in the Koreas, in the China Straits, in the South China Sea, in Kashmir. Indeed, we cannot predict confidently that tensions will not arise where they are currently dormant or non-existent.

We are convinced, however, that we must take advantage of the current comparative stability in the region to build the structures that will either head off conflict in the future or help us to deal with whatever tensions do arise.

Since being appointed Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) I have travelled to virtually every country in the region; I have travelled to every ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] country, and from China to New Zealand, and Korea to Pakistan. In total I have visited close to 25 countries in my portfolio. From my repeated visits it is quite evident that Canada's role in the Asia-Pacific is often not well understood. But, as I hope to show you, our past, our present and our future are bound up in the region.

Canada made significant sacrifices in places such as Hong Kong in World War II. At the other extremity of Asia, we have been involved in attempts to keep the peace in Kashmir since 1948, and we continue to offer our support in any effort to find solutions to the current conflict in Sri Lanka.

In the Korean War, Canadians formed one of the largest UN contingents and suffered many casualties. We served in the Indochinese and Vietnamese control commissions. And we participated in UN actions in Afghanistan and Cambodia. We are still active in demining training in Cambodia.

We were one of the driving forces in the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the only region-wide security forum for Asia-Pacific. In the ASEAN Regional Forum context, Canada took the initiative to hold a seminar on peacekeeping in Brunei in March, and will co-chair, with Malaysia, a follow-up seminar in the coming months.

I am also pleased to note that the 19 ministers assembled in Brunei on August 1 for the second ASEAN Regional Forum and Post-Ministerial saw fit to single out for particular attention the Canadian contribution to the South China Sea workshops hosted by Indonesia.

In addition to formal governmental processes like the ASEAN Regional Forum and Post Ministerial, there has also been constant and very encouraging activity at a more informal level among non-governmental players such as academics, and officials acting in their personal capacities. This dialogue has paralleled and, at times, propelled the formal intergovernmental process. Canadians have played an active role in offering both intellectual and organizational leadership to this process.

As they have grown and proven their value, these activities have become more focussed, and there is now a region-wide, non-governmental umbrella organization that tries to pull together

all the regional activities: CSCAP – the Council on Security Co-operation in Asia-Pacific. CSCAP's membership comprises institutes of international and security affairs from 10 countries. The Canadian Committee of CSCAP recently co-sponsored with Japan (in Tokyo) a very productive seminar on "frameworks for stability on the Korean Peninsula."

We are also actively encouraging the Canadian community to take a more prominent role in Asia-Pacific security issues. This has led to the formation of an organization of Canadian specialists from all over this country – the Canadian Consortium on Asia-Pacific Security, whose membership now exceeds 150, mainly academics and officials.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Canada is working to build a co-operative security framework that responds to the realities and needs of the region. We are also working to position the region – our region – in a stronger position to contribute in a meaningful way to building global security. This means engaging a wide range of tools – bilateral and multilateral – and developing a diverse set of relationships. These include relationships among business people and military officers, among diplomats and academics, and among artists and students. There can be no real security if hunger, poverty, social injustice and environmental degradation occur. Thus our development assistance programs will continue to be an important instrument in support of Canada's foreign policy interests, while reflecting our humanitarian concerns in the region.

As our trade with Asia continues to grow we frequently encounter political conditions that are different from those we enjoy in Canada. We respect time-honoured traditions and cultures, but as Canadians we cannot turn aside from violations of universally accepted fundamental freedoms. As a government, we raise our concerns in this area with our Asian partners. We shall continue to do so.

I must point out, however, that trade and human rights are mutually reinforcing. In fact, trade itself is a force for human rights. Trade benefits Canada through job creation – a government priority – but it also supports economic, social and inevitably, political reform in countries like China. We believe a China open to the world can only be good for its people, both economically and politically, and will further the cause of respect for human rights.

Governments that open their doors to international trade are more sensitive to the views and reactions of others. Greater economic freedom encourages the growth of political freedom. People-to-people contact in day-to-day trade can be an instrument of change. The Government of Canada therefore encourages Canadian businesses to expand their participation in world markets. In

our view, communication is more of a catalyst than isolation is. And the end result is a more secure Asia, and a more secure world.

Canadian realities have also changed as a result of our engagement with Asia-Pacific. For example, Asia now provides more than 50 per cent of our immigrants. Five per cent of our population is of Asian origin. Chinese is the third most frequently spoken language of Canadians. Fifty thousand Canadian citizens live in Hong Kong.

In the Canadian Parliament, I am one of several members of Parliament born in Asia.

Despite the already existing high level of Canadian engagement in Asia-Pacific, the Defence White Paper, the Parliamentary Review of Foreign Policy and our department's response to it all pointed to the need to enhance Canadian visibility and activity in the region. You will note that this was taken very much to heart by the Navy, which will now balance its presence on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

The recent and very successful visit of two of Canada's state-of-the-art frigates to Southeast Asia and the South Pacific points to a determination to be more actively involved in co-operating with friends on both sides of the Pacific. This is a recognition that vital Canadian security interests lie in Asia-Pacific. Some of these are global concerns and others are regional.

Among these interests are such matters as nuclear non-proliferation, control of the spread of weapons of mass destruction, conventional threats to peace, environmental dangers, sudden mass movements of populations and international crime.

In closing, as a country bordering both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, Canada has the opportunity to expand in both directions. I believe the time is right for us to realize our full potential as a partner in the dynamic developments taking place in the Asia-Pacific region and, as I have just outlined, I believe we are well on our way to achieving this goal.

Thank you.