

Statement

95/59

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE ANDRÉ OUELLET,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
TO THE CANADA-CHINA BUSINESS COUNCIL

MONTREAL, Quebec
October 13, 1995



Government
of Canada

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Senator Austin,
Mr. Liu Huaqiu,
Mr. Sharp,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Canada-China Business Council for their kind invitation. It is a pleasure to be with you here today to help celebrate the 25th anniversary of Canadian-Chinese diplomatic relations.

Canada's bold decision to recognize China in 1970, over some American objections, exemplified an enduring quality of Canadian foreign policy under successive Liberal governments: pursuing an independent approach.

I look forward to hearing from my predecessor, Mitchell Sharp, on the events of 25 years ago that led to the establishment of these relations. No doubt he will offer us a unique "inside view."

Canada took a stand then that everything must be done to decrease China's isolation, to expose it to the cross-currents of international opinion and to work towards eventual Chinese co-operation in solving outstanding problems of international peace and security.

We saw clearly what was necessary: to promote our own national interests and at the same time our interest in global security. This is a dual-track policy, which we continue to pursue today under the government of Prime Minister Chrétien.

Twenty-five years is not long in the history of nations. In that quarter century we have seen immense changes in China, Canada and the world.

China's development over the past 25 years

In the last 25 years we have seen a transformation of the Chinese economy. We have seen a surge in the growth of markets and choices, an explosion of the middle class and a revolution in communication.

China's political role in the world has also evolved dramatically in the last 25 years.

China took its UN seat in 1971. It acceded to a handful of agreements in the 70s but the pace soon accelerated. In the 1980s, China joined the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and conventions facilitating business, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization. It acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1992 and supported the indefinite extension of the Treaty this past May.

In regard to human rights, China still has a long way to go. But we must be encouraged by the fact that China participated in the

Conference that produced the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights in 1993 and has just hosted the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing. Despite all the reservations and everything that was said, that conference was a success.

China has provided peacekeepers to UN endeavours dating from the 1948 UN Truce Supervision Operation between Israel and Egypt and, more recently, on the Iraq/Kuwait border and in Western Sahara.

And although China is continuing nuclear testing, which we in Canada have deplored, we are encouraged by China's support for a commitment to negotiate a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty [CTBT] by 1996.

I don't think there is any doubt that we feel more secure in the world today because China is a partner in international peace and security.

Canada's relations with China in the past 25 years

Let me now turn from this quick view of China's recent development in the last 25 years to Canada's relations with China today.

In the tradition of our policy of engagement, I announced in May 1994 Canada's Four Pillar Policy on China.

The Canadian government intends to secure long-term relations with China on the four pillars of our relationship: economic partnership; the rule of law, good governance and human rights; sustainable development; and peace and security.

We cannot sacrifice one pillar at the expense of another, for they are all mutually reinforcing.

This is the basis for a co-operative partnership and wide-ranging contact. The Canadian government believes that only through systematic and wide-ranging contact will we be able to encourage greater openness in China, broaden China's engagement in the world community and, accordingly, advance Canadian interests.

Economic partnership

Economically, Canada has benefited from the fast growth of the Asia-Pacific community generally, and of China in particular.

Bilateral trade with China has increased at an average annual growth rate exceeding 13 per cent since 1979.

Canadian companies are in the forefront of those becoming part of the Chinese market.

The government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien is determined to support their initiatives using all available means.

The rule of law, good governance and human rights

For economic partnership to succeed, Canadians must have confidence that within China the rule of law and transparency are respected.

The rule of law must extend beyond institutions to behavioural reality – a legal ethic. Laws on paper are ineffective unless they are enforced. Canada supports changes that reduce the gap between institutions, regulations and organizational behaviour.

One of the ways we will continue to encourage respect for the rule of law, human rights and good governance, but also sustainable development, is through Canada's Development Assistance Programs.

CIDA's [Canadian International Development Agency] China Country Development Policy Framework mirrors that with its themes of economic co-operation, environmental sustainability and human rights, good governance and democratic development.

CIDA is playing an important role by engaging agents of change in China in a constructive manner. Projects as diverse as the training of senior judges, the promotion of women's rights and the development, management and dissemination of statistical information all support good governance.

Sustainable development

CIDA's program also supports China's continuing economic reform and the promotion of partnerships between enterprises and institutions. The bilateral program is complemented by a large and active Industrial Co-operation Program, which assists Canadian firms to pursue joint ventures and other opportunities in China.

In terms of environmental sustainability, the bilateral program is currently developing projects in energy-efficient, clean production and the sustainable development of the resource-rich Tarim Basin.

Peace and Security

China can and must play a critical role in ensuring global peace and security. Canada welcomes China's participation in the institutions concerned with global governance. We encourage China to give full play to its ability to become a positive force in the world community.

The ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] Regional Forum [ARF] is an excellent example of how Canada can work with China to advance peace and security on a regional level. The ARF represents a significant step for a region that has no tradition of multilateral dialogue on security questions. Canada and China are members as "dialogue" partner and "consultative" partner respectively. We can work in such institutions to encourage a constructive Chinese approach to such issues as the dispute over the Spratly Islands.

In this regard, Canada, in co-operation with Indonesia, is playing a major role toward achieving a negotiated settlement to this dispute.

Conclusion

Interdependence is not just a nice idea, but an absolute reality in today's global environment. Our prosperity and the prosperity of our children depend on Canada's ability to interact positively with the world around us - to gain from what the world has to offer us and to contribute our own substantial skills and resources. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of China.

Therefore, engagement is our China policy.

The foresight of Prime Minister Trudeau and Mitchell Sharp launched us on that policy.

In this world of instant communication, real understanding requires patience, persistence and a willingness to listen. Trust is based on understanding, and influence comes from trust.

Engagement to us means contact, consultation, dialogue and exchange. Only through engagement can we inform, advocate, understand, persuade and influence. These are the methods Canada chooses to employ. In the long run we believe they are the most effective in encouraging change.

Just as 25 years ago Canada chose to engage China as a means to open it to the world, so now we continue to work further with China as partners to address today's challenges of global peace and security.

Thank you.