NATIONAL FORUM 1997 ASIA-PACIFIC
SUMMARY REPORT

Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development

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This report is an integration of the recommendations generated at the National Forum meetings held in Victoria, Waterloo, Halifax and Quebec City. Participants were not expected to arrive at a consensus, therefore, the following represents the policy options generated at all the meetings.

Canadian foreign policy should identify Canada's security interests in Asia-Pacific as "a secure and stable environment, subject to the rule of law and characterised by sustainable development". Sustainable development should include encouraging "responsible prosperity" which involves attention to issues as diverse as pay equity and the development and enforcement of child labour laws.

**GENERAL POLICY OPTIONS**

*Effective foreign policy development needs to include and build on a critique of current Canadian practice and existing policies.*

*Indigenous peoples in Canada and Asia must be at the table in policy discussions to speak on their own behalf, (the Circumpolar Arctic Council offers a model for a forum for international discourse that could perhaps be used in the Asia-Pacific context).*

*Canada should continue to use a wide range of diplomatic tools, including those of trade, investment, development and culture to promote the adoption of appropriate systems of law, trade, labour, human rights and sustainable development/environment.*

*Canada should take a leading role in international fora to promote the adoption of appropriate systems of law, trade, labour, human rights and sustainable development/environment.*

*Civil society linkages and exchanges need to be strengthened.*

*To enhance its influence and leverage, Canada needs to increase its on-the-ground representation in the region (government, non-government and commercial).*

*The 50th anniversary of the UN Human Rights declaration offers a significant opportunity to promote human rights in the region.*

*Multilateralism continues to be the preferred vehicle for diplomatic intervention, however, Canada should continue to use other avenues as appropriate.*

*Canada needs to enhance the role of Indigenous Peoples and Asian Canadians through inclusive staffing procedures at the domestic governmental level. This would help to ensure an integration of diversity of opinion and experience.*
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

How should Canadians promote sustainable development in Asia-Pacific and where; What should we contribute; Is there a minimum level of economic/industrial development needed before advancing sustainability; and how can Canada best work with like-minded countries to promote sustainability.

Internationally, Canadians should promote the development and use of clean technology, provide support to the region through the dissemination of environmental planning expertise, encourage ISO 14000 certification as well as foster educational links between Canada and Asia-Pacific. Canadians should also support sustainable development in the region by establishing linkages with like-minded countries through efforts at collaborative, non-competitive research and development.

Canadian businesses can play a role in fostering sustainable development through demonstration of best practices and technology transfer, recognizing that the learning process is two-way. The cost effectiveness of good corporate environmental practice is recognized by Canadian companies, a lesson to be shared with Asia-Pacific counterparts. Promoting environmental success stories in an Asia-Pacific context is important. Canada can play a positive role through foreign aid and education. Sustainable development policies and goals need to be long-term in nature.

Policy Options

1. Develop Sustainable Development policy from the following principles:
   (a) accountability based on assessment, indicators (e.g., food security), and qualitative and quantitative measures, and the engagement of Canadians in policy development and measurement;
   (b) use of different and evolving policies which take into account diversity in world communities (i.e. social/cultural);
   (c) critical evaluation of Canada’s practices/policies including a commitment to ecological and socially responsible consumption (with equity in mind);
   (d) inclusion of account policies, local knowledge, science and technology, and implementation capacity;
   (e) recognition of the following elements of sustainable development: common security, ecological and social and economic well-being, temporal body, and an ecological imperative.

2. Review all Canadian policies and international agreements for their contribution to human and ecological security and sustainability.

3. Review all international agreements which relate to or impact on sustainability to ensure accountability by Canada.
4. Identify and define Canadian values which reflect our commitment to, and the necessity for global sustainability.

5. State that Canada recognizes and asserts its responsibility for holding transnational corporations accountable for their impact on sustainable development (e.g. through the UN).

6. Develop international linkages and networks of influence.

7. Pursue and coordinate unofficial consultation and collaboration. ie. Track 2 process (ARF, CSCAP, APEC study centres, PECC) which could help develop coherence between the various levels i.e. global, multilateral, bilateral, regional and community.

8. Increase representation of indigenous peoples and Asian-Canadians in DFAIT and international organizations involved in Asia-Pacific.

9. Promote consultative mechanisms and collaborative problem solving through the official process. ie. Track 1/APEC.

10. Ensure that issues of sustainable development are on the agendas of the other Forum meetings.

11. Integrate business and NGO input into relevant APEC fora.

12. Ensure that terms of reference for publicly funded feasibility studies in infrastructure projects include components relevant to sustainable development.

13. Make Canadian foreign policy on sustainable development explicit.

14. Develop a statement on Canadian foreign policy sustainable development values.

15. Develop and support strategies to aid in implementation of value structures in relation to issues of sustainable development concomitant with Canada's. For example: 
   a) industry awards for clean technology exporters; b) annual review of public and private sector sustainable development activities; c) partnership between private and public sector capital flows, and NGOs, to support sustainable development.

16. All economic activity should be underpinned by the principles and practice of sustainability - both in Canada and in our activities overseas.

17. Incentives should be developed to encourage annual reporting on business and environment activities.
HUMAN RIGHTS

Should protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region be a goal for Canada? What is the best strategy and what would be the role for business, government and NGOs in promoting human rights.

Canada needs to develop a strategy to promote human rights that incorporates the use of Tracks I, II and III, keeping in mind however that while human rights are universal, they should be promoted in a culturally sensitive context. Canadian policies and values are often good, but the strategy to implement them can be ineffective (e.g. women and development). Further, cultures are not static, an aspect that should be reflected in the strategy. Issue-or sector-specific initiatives can affect a broader range of civil society (e.g. the training of judges in Asia-Pacific directly targets problems of corruption in the legal system while opening up avenues for reform in other sectors of society). As well, although it is important to work in concert with like-minded countries, it would be a good idea to keep in mind that like-mindedness is more fluid and issue-specific than ever.

Policy Options

1. Direct attention at strategies, priorities and application of human rights policies not at definition.

2. Adopt local strategies that are issue-, sector- and country -specific.

3. Adopt strategies that are multi-faceted targeting civil, political, economic and social spheres. They should also incorporate direct and indirect approaches (Tracks I, II, and III).

4. Maintain and reinforce commitment to the UN system of universal human rights protection, and use the 50th anniversary of the UN Human Rights Declaration to encourage Asia-Pacific region affirmation of these principles. Use other multilateral instruments of the UN and ILO to full advantage.

5. Employ a range of options on a case by case basis to influence compliance with human rights/labour rights, including aid, trade and investment-related incentives and sanctions; for example, in light of the positions adopted by the UN (e.g. Burma, East Timor), demonstrate an increased willingness to act.

6. Support efforts through multilateral institutions to require transparency in financial arrangements and budgets, in order to reduce corruption and hidden military expenditures which often support human rights abuse.

7. Suggest through APEC that Canada host a meeting of Asia-Pacific parliamentarians, early in 1998, to discuss issues of human rights and sustainable development (further to the January 1997 successful meeting in Vancouver).

9. Require Team Canada to give equal voice to human rights organizations.

10. Facilitate the use of informal organizations to promote human rights internationally. Involvement of civil society at the grass roots level is important and could be achieved through cultural exchanges, educational programs, promotion of regional and national human rights organizations. Canada should also strengthen linkages between Canadian organizations and groups and those in Asia-Pacific countries working for the protection of labour rights and human rights.

11. Ensure that representatives from minority and indigenous groups are present when addressing human rights issues.

12. Encourage the foreign service to become less Eurocentric, more flexible and more collaborative.


14. Increase Official Development Assistance funds to established Canadian targets, including monies allocated to non-governmental organizations - i.e. support for civil society in Canada and the Asia-Pacific region. Reduction of poverty and improvement in living conditions will facilitate respect for human rights.

15. Direct attention to those groups particularly guilty of human rights abusers e.g. military and police.

16. Child labour and other child exploitation issues should be contained within the umbrella of human rights.

17. Team Canada participants should be sensitized to human rights abuses particular to the region in which they intend to do business.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

How can Canadians help indigenous peoples find a voice and role in Canada and in Asia-Pacific. Is this an appropriate or credible foreign policy objective.

Indigenous peoples can and need to speak for themselves and should be provided with the voice space to do so. This applies to indigenous peoples in Canada and Asia-Pacific, recognizing that the situation in the latter region is complicated by other categorizations such as minorities, tribal
and other communal designations. Indigenous peoples are pursuing North-South and Canada-Asia-Pacific links, dialogues and activities.

Indigenous peoples are adversely affected by non-sustainable economic development such as resource extraction. Indigenous peoples can and do conduct business, but their models for sustainable development, which have much to offer, must be acknowledged. In the area of health, there is some recognition of the sciences and knowledge of indigenous and Asian peoples.

The UN "individual" rights framework is being challenged by Asian and indigenous peoples. An indigenous peoples framework of collective rights, which requires responsibilities and benefits for individuals, offers a model that can avoid the dichotomy of Asian collective rights and Western individual rights. Also, Canada has in its indigenous peoples an untapped resource to more constructively engage Asia-Pacific nations in such basic areas as diplomatic practices.

Although Canada has the benefit of diversity in ideas, geography and ethnicity, Canada’s credibility on indigenous peoples issues has suffered since the release of the recent Aboriginal Report.

There has to be a recognition that most human rights violations are directed at indigenous peoples here and in Asia-Pacific.

Policy Options

1. Within APEC:
   (a) Promote and broaden civil society participation in APEC meetings, especially greater participation of indigenous peoples.
   (b) Promote a forum on indigenous peoples issues.

2. Promote "participatory" research on indigenous peoples, that is, conduct research with the participation of indigenous peoples. Pursue shared learning regarding health in particular through cooperative measures.

3. Support more diversified exchanges between and among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples from Canada and Asia-Pacific. Pursue broader sectoral or grassroots dialogue and participation by supporting NGOs in their work with grassroots and other contacts. Support technology linkages to encourage dialogue between indigenous peoples with mutual concerns.

4. Play a leadership role in the development of initiatives in support of and supported by indigenous peoples both at the community and international levels, e.g. the UN Forum for Indigenous Peoples. Canada should continue to promote the Convention on Biodiversity at the 1998 Madrid Conference with attention to article 8(J) that provides a framework to deal with indigenous peoples issues.
5. Build a policy capacity by creating and sustaining a critical mass of indigenous peoples and experts to provide the necessary skills, knowledge and options for policy development.

6. Include the following elements in a "code of conduct" vis-a-vis aboriginal peoples:
   (a) Greater promotion of and education about indigenous peoples, including educational resources that relay cultural viewpoints, practices and lifestyles.
   (b) Equity and fairness in cultural context, to allow diversity and to preserve indigenous peoples cultural context within "globalization."
   (c) Creation of "voice space" for indigenous peoples to speak on their own behalf with business.

7. Develop a policy or set of initiatives that address indigenous youth in particular.

**CODES OF CONDUCT**

Should Canada concentrate its efforts on the establishment of a domestic or an international code of conduct. Should the codes of conduct be voluntary or mandatory, who should they be applied to and who should be involved in making the decisions.

A core set of values need to be established domestically. Canada can then work towards the adoption of these core values internationally possibly through a body resembling the International Labour Organization. Discussions on codes of conduct should involve all sectors of civil society since they effect all spheres of life. It is highly unlikely that voluntary codes will be specific enough to be effective.

**Policy Options**

1. The issue of the role of business in the promotion of human rights needs to be examined. There is no guarantee that company ethics will mirror the values of the Canadian public or government. There should be instruments put in place to encourage businesses to work in partnership with NGOs and communities (e.g. joint development of codes of conduct).

2. Appropriate corporate codes of conduct, based on agreed principles of best practice, should be applied to Canadian overseas trade and industry receiving federal government support. Access to government trade and industry programs should be linked to best practices including anti-corruption, working conditions, security of products, health and safety, the environment, child labour, gender discrimination.

3. The Government should facilitate multi-stakeholder consultations for the development of appropriate corporate codes of conduct for Canadian overseas trade and industry, based on contextual and sectoral factors.
4. The Government should facilitate a partnership approach to increasing awareness of appropriate codes of conduct and practice for Canadian overseas trade and industry, utilizing a range of educational tools. (e.g., business schools, media).

5. The Government should promote the adoption of codes of conduct at NAFTA, OECD, APEC. A multilateral international process would ensure the success of any initiative.

6. The Government should require participants to have adopted Codes of Conduct in their organizational structure and business practices.

7. Incentives rather than penalties should be used to encourage the adoption of best practices. The Government should explore possible ISO certification for companies that register their codes of conduct with the Department.

8. The Government should host business fora to encourage Canadian companies to adopt existing positive human rights practices or codes.

9. Business should use bilateral trade councils as a way to share knowledge, experience and values.

10. Business should be brought in on the ground floor.

11. Wages of civil servants should be increased to help fight corruption.

How can Canadians /Canada best address corruption issues.

Policy Options

1. Canada should lead efforts in appropriate fora (e.g., the OECD) to obtain a multilateral agreement against corruption which should be implemented within the next two years. (e.g., based on the US Foreign Corruption Act).

2. Canada should encourage the adoption of anti-corruption practices in bilateral trade policies and agreements. The Government should support multilateral organizations to require greater financial transparency, including criminalization of bribery, removal of tax deductions on bribes and examine the possibility of enacting a similar law to the American Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, 1997.

3. Canada should support efforts to reform legal systems and practices in Asia-Pacific, which would eventually reflect anti-corruption and ethical business practices.
FREE MEDIA

Should Canadians promote freedom of the media in the Asia-Pacific region? How? Can Canada help to develop communications/media capacity? Is there a role for institutions like Radio Canada International, or private sector or NGO initiatives, education, training, exchanges, etc. and who should take the lead.

Policy Options

1. Continue to promote universal values (freedom of the press being one) notwithstanding the perceived dichotomy between East and West.

2. Take the initiative to encourage foreign media to come and to work with Canadian media by offering fellowships supported by the media (including Conrad Black, RCI and CBC).

3. Maintain a quiet diplomacy approach to free media, but in some situations, such as the persecution of journalists, be more active and vocal, both diplomatically and/or through the NGO community. Building upon Canada’s historical coalition-building role, collaborate with like-minded countries to pressure nations that severely restrict the free flow of communication and information.

4. Invest Radio Canada International with the appropriate resources to act as a credible global communications vehicle committed to raising Canada's profile abroad through the provision of quality Canadian programming and international news.

5. Promote the use of Internet and other information technologies in an effort to promote free media.

6. Focus Canadian expertise and efforts on smaller projects where policy would have the most impact. Assist the development of media infrastructure at the grass roots level by:
   (a) fostering linkages between journalists and professional journalism organizations at the local, national and international levels.
   (b) providing communities with appropriate equipment and training in order to build a sense of empowerment at the local level. (In the Philippines, the Tambuli Community Radio Project with its "Village on the Air" program is an example.)
   (c) seeking to expand and build upon situations that have proven mutually beneficial for the community and donors (for example, a Canadian-funded video camera used by the small public health unit in the city of Rafah, in the Gaza Strip).

7. Promote greater multi-sectoral interaction among journalists in Asia-Pacific, and those in the legal, academic, local community level, government officials and multilateral organizations.
8. Support journalism training programs that foster responsible reporting practices, and/or workshops targeting government and legal experts regarding laws on libel, contempt and freedom of the press.

9. Adopt a tactical approach that would emphasize a more specific, case by case approach. This method would downplay cultural sensitivity, and take advantage of the degree of ambiguity allowed by various governments in the Asia-Pacific region.

10. **Canada should encourage Canadian Embassies to place greater importance on the issue of journalists at risk, and to act in a more timely fashion on alerts given by the International Freedom of Expression Exchange.**

11. Canada should encourage Canadian journalism schools to explicitly tap into networks within Asia-Pacific through methods like exchange and training of Asian investigative journalists in Canada.

12. Canada should support the opening of regional institutional frameworks, particularly APEC, more thoroughly to improve media access through the use of daily briefs, and the development of media centres.

13. There is poor Canadian presence in Asia-Pacific. Canada should increase official (foreign service) and unofficial (media) on the ground in Asia-Pacific.

**SECURITY AND STABILITY**

*What are the key security issues which Canadian foreign policy should be addressing in the region? How? Are there key regions/countries where Canada should focus its efforts in terms of security concerns.*

Although no nation would overtly deny the virtues of moderation, tolerance and respect for the rule of law, Canada has been particularly successful (so far) in reflecting those values. While Canada does not have a monopoly on ethics and values, a national commitment to such values (landmines, weapons proliferation) sets an example, encourages others and provides a publicly stated standard upon which to base official Canadian response to unsavory actions in less democratic members of the Asia-Pacific community.

**Policy Options**

1. Given the present foreign policy priorities of prosperity, security and justice, it is in Canada's interest that Asia-Pacific enjoys stability and security, with the caveats that security and stability are not isolated ends in themselves. They must not be achieved at the cost of fundamental human rights or the health of the people and environment of the region.
2. Canadian foreign policy should exploit fully its success in advancing multilateral diplomacy elsewhere and its bilingual and multicultural heritage to contribute to the common good of the Asia-Pacific community.

3. Canadian efforts at building military-civilian partnerships here and abroad should be increased.

4. Canadian foreign policy should clearly express Canada's perception of its national values, so that the basis of this nation's stance on controversial political events is clearly understood by all. "Moderation, tolerance and respect for the rule of law" is not a bad formula and should be acceptable to all statesmanlike members of the Canadian political spectrum, regardless of who is in power. Canada should continue to speak out against unacceptable acts committed in the region.

5. At any given time, focus on particular areas or issues is inevitable. Nonetheless, international affairs are intrinsically unpredictable. Attention must therefore never become so focused on one area or issue that critical and significant events elsewhere create an unexpected crisis for which Canada is neither equipped nor prepared to address.

REFUGEES

Should Canada do more to help resolve the international refugee crisis. And if so, what initiatives should it take.

1. The end of the Cold War has not changed the causes of refugee crises. They will continue and new ones will appear.

2. Canada has demonstrated a capacity to give leadership in refugee crises (as demonstrated in Rwanda), as well as in related areas such as peacebuilding.

3. The only effective solutions for managing and ending refugee crises will be multilateral and multisectoral. Government co-operation with NGOs has been an important component of international response to refugee crises. However, the UNHCR, a central multilateral agency, does not have permanent funding: its existence must be renewed every five years.

Policy Options

1. Continue to demonstrate leadership and expertise in refugee response.

2. Fulfil obligations to international conventions on refugees and ratify the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers.
3. Promote the entrenching of a permanent UNHCR with adequate funding.

4. Pursue preventive diplomacy instruments to prevent refugee crises and multilaterally develop Early Warning Systems to facilitate early response when they occur.

5. Continue to cooperate and coordinate with NGOs to ensure maximum effectiveness.

OTHER

Role of Oceans Trade and Industry

Canada is a maritime country and should play a leadership role in international oceans governance, trade and industry.

Priority regions for Canadian oceans trade and industry, and the types of activity within those regions, should be identified. The Asia-Pacific region should be included as one of these.

Human Resource Development and Capacity Building

The Canadian government should recognize that training and education in the international context is the gateway to the transfer of technology and other opportunities.

Further, there is a natural linkage between the people in the coastal communities in Canada and Southeast Asia, including indigenous peoples. Canada should recognize that technology and aquaculture are not the "cure all" for the world-wide crisis in fisheries.

It is critical that Canadians receive education in international thinking/internationalization and that assistance should be provided to communities to explore the resources available to them locally (through NGOs) to support this goal. Opportunities to share our knowledge with partners in the Asia-Pacific region were identified including distance and continuing education (for teachers/trainers as well as students) and the twinning of educational institutions.

Policy Options

1. Youth participation (both internationally and in Canada) in developing policy must be ensured.

2. Recruitment to Canadian universities must be promoted aggressively in the Asia-Pacific region through federal-provincial cooperation. Increased funding for scholarships in Canada must be made available. Visa procedures for students coming to study in Canada must be streamlined.
3. The complex issue of child labour requires creative development initiatives. One strategy Canada could utilize is that of ensuring that the fair wage standards of the International Labour Organization are enforced.

Is there a particular role for Canada’s maritime sector in human resource development and capacity building in the Asia-Pacific region.

The marine environment has no boundaries. For example, Arctic marine pollution is the result of activities in Asia and southern North America. Canada can take the lead in international fora to influence policies in Southeast Asia since we have proven capabilities in marine environmental technologies, policies, and education and training. A substantial number of educational linkages and training opportunities already exist in the region and these should continue to be supported and encouraged to expand.