

Thank You, Mr. Speaker.

I have the honour of rising in the House today to table the Government's response to the report of the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy.

Mr. Speaker, my duties as Minister of Foreign Affairs have given me many opportunities to observe the role that our country plays in the world. It had been thought in some quarters that our privileged position on the world stage would be called into question by the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, I am proud to note that our country continues to play an important role, and that the international community's expectations of us have not diminished.

Mr. Speaker, Canada occupies a position of leadership among the open, advanced societies, which are becoming increasingly influential as world power is dispersing and becoming more defined in economic terms.

Canada's geographic location gives it an important advantage as new poles of political and economic power emerge in the Pacific and Latin America.

Canada's cultural heritage gives it privileged access to the anglophone and francophone worlds as well as to the homelands of Canadians drawn from every part of the globe who make up its multicultural personality.

Canada can further its global interests better than any other country through its active membership in key international groupings, for example, hosting the G-7 Summit this year and the APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum] Summit in 1997.

Canada's history as a non-colonizing power, champion of constructive multilateralism and effective international mediator, underpins an important and distinctive role among nations as they seek to build a new and better order.

Canada, thus, is in a privileged position to influence change and to benefit from opportunities as we move toward the end of the 20th century. The Government will exercise that influence responsibly to protect and promote Canada's values and interests in the world.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee faced an enormous task, and I think that the Government's response had to reflect the depth and quality of the work done by its members.

The Government has kept the promise contained in the Red Book. It has made the development of Canadian foreign policy a democratic process by seeking the participation of Canadians and their members of Parliament.