

active in this field than at the present time.

Canada will continue, therefore, to play a useful role in the elaboration within NATO of a declaration flowing from Dr. Kissinger's initiative of April 23 last year, which has the aim of revitalizing the solidarity of the Alliance. At the same time, the Government will continue to work in the context of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) towards the lowering of barriers which impede the freer movement of persons, ideas, information and trade between the East and the West. If agreement is reached on satisfactory provisions in these and other areas, the final stage of the conference will take place in Helsinki in the course of this summer at ministerial or higher level. Simultaneously, Canada is participating in the talks going on in Vienna on the Mutual and Balanced Forces Reduction between NATO and Warsaw Pact countries.

Canada became a full-fledged member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in July 1973 enabling it to make an increasingly valuable contribution to the work of this important United Nations body. On the strictly bilateral plane, the traditionally good relations which we are enjoying with the individual West European states are developing quite substantively in many fields. I have in mind the fruitful and concrete cooperation which is emerging from the cultural as well as scientific and technological agreements we have with a number of them.

Finally, I should like to refer to the exchange of visits between Canadian parliamentarians and their colleagues from the European parliament. The Government welcomes this development which adds to the stimulating link, which has already existed for several years, with the 17 member nations of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Eastern Europe

Relations with the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe have continued to develop. The main challenge now is not so much to expand relations further -- although this may be possible -- but to build on the foundations that have been laid. This challenge is perhaps less exciting but no less demanding than the one we faced a few years ago when we were trying to find new areas for cooperation. I remain convinced of the desirability of good relations, on the basis of reciprocity, with these countries. This serves not only Canada's bilateral interests but should also be seen as a contribution to détente.

Japan

When I spoke to you in May last year, I said that we had been attempting to "politicize" a bilateral relationship with Japan which had, in the past, been too narrowly commercial. I have met twice since that time with my Japanese counterpart to discuss matters of mutual interest. Canadian officials have conducted various informal talks with their Japanese colleagues and I am glad to be able to report that there has been an increasing trend toward consulting with the Japanese on world issues.

Japan is our second largest trading partner. Japanese investment could play an important role in furthering Canadian development objectives and in this