

Mr. President, Excellencies, ministers, Monsieur Camdessus, colleagues: greetings and welcome to Canada and to Winnipeg.

I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the Conference on Partnership for Economic Transformation in Ukraine. We share a common goal: a prosperous and democratic Ukraine. It is my hope that the Conference will bring about a greater level of understanding and commitment among those present to the transformation of the Ukrainian economy. The economic and financial linkages that continue to exist with its neighbours make the health of Ukraine's economy essential to the economic health of the region as a whole.

Ukraine occupies a special place in our government's foreign policy. The one million Canadians of Ukrainian origin have left their mark in our country's young history, indeed in all sectors of Canadian life. Canada and Ukraine possess a fantastic advantage in that we can build on those human ties to foster a fruitful, prosperous relationship between our two countries. I wish to thank the Ukrainian community in Canada for its efforts in helping us prepare for your visit, Mr. President.

When I visited Ukraine last March, I saw first-hand the enormous challenges facing that country. But I also witnessed the fantastic will and enthusiasm of Ukrainians for building a free market economy and democratic institutions. Most importantly perhaps, I became even more aware that the international community could not let Ukraine face these enormous tasks alone.

Canada is committed to helping facilitate the integration of Ukraine into the international community. Canada was pleased that its G-7 partners endorsed our proposal to organize this conference. We all agree that stability and independence in Ukraine, as anywhere, must rest on the foundation of economic prosperity.

The Canadian government has sought to provide some of the tools for building a unique partnership between our two countries. Indeed, the political, economic and military co-operation agreements we signed this week establish a framework for this partnership.

The Foreign Investment Protection Agreement I signed with Foreign Minister Udovenko and the Economic Co-operation Agreement I signed with Foreign Economic Relations Minister Osyka on Monday in Ottawa, are part of our assistance to create a proper environment for business. The Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Assistance I signed with Minister Udovenko is our contribution to assisting Ukraine in its transition towards a democratic society.

Our common goal, all of us here today, is to achieve the full integration of Ukraine into the world economy. The main actors in this partnership will ultimately not be governments, but