

We were thus very honoured and pleased to be elected to chair the Board of Governors at the last annual meeting in New Delhi. It is my personal pleasure to be with you today and I will serve you as diligently as I can in fulfilling my responsibilities.

Canada believes the Asian Development Bank is an integral part of the global effort to foster development and to strengthen the network of regional institutions. Membership requires us to contribute in full measure our knowledge, experiences and thoughtful guidance as we consider the challenges which confront the region.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, this annual meeting takes place at a difficult and uncertain time in the world's history, which paradoxically holds great promise. The challenge to peace and security in the Gulf has been successfully met, but at a considerable social and economic cost, and now tragic human consequences. Events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have also captured the world's attention and posed new challenges.

We have a common responsibility to transcend the immediate and develop long-term strategies to build the world as we would like it to be. So today I want to look forward and reflect on the challenges which will confront Asia, its partners, and the Asian Development Bank in the decade ahead.

The world has been thought of as a collection of self-contained societies. At an accelerating pace, we are confronted by the challenge of global economic integration. This shift from a political to an economic global agenda is mirrored by the globalization of investment, production and markets, and the corresponding increase in economic integration and interdependence.

Our struggle is to keep pace. We must create the means and the institutions to manage the complex interaction among governments, individuals, corporations, entrepreneurs and bankers. The promotion of open, market-based economies appropriate for an interdependent world has become the critical task to which we must apply ourselves with full vigour.

The impact of the forces impelling us to integrate is clearest in Asia itself and in its relations with the rest of the world. The phenomenal economic success of many countries of the region, the explosion of business connections, technology and information flows and investment -- in both directions -- have transformed your relations with the rest of the world.