

Canada is a big country and a complex market. We are ready to help your exporters promote their products in our market. We are dedicating 3/4 of a million dollars to finance visits by the ASEAN private sector to Canada. Participants will explore and develop market opportunities, attend market information seminars, and participate in such missions as food packaging, processing and marketing.

We are also funding the newly-formed ASEAN-Canada Business Council (ACBC) to promote two-way trade and investment. That council will work with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Conference Board of Canada, and other institutions, on a major research program to help entrepreneurs and investors, in Canada and ASEAN, do business together more knowledgeably. We are also considering an innovative executive exchange program for young business people from Canada and ASEAN.

These initiatives are designed to step up the involvement of our private sectors in expanding two-way trade and investment.

Another important initiative involving the private sector was the Canada-ASEAN forum in Vancouver last September. Senior business representatives from each side were brought together to identify mutual opportunities. Valuable and profitable contacts were made in various sectors such as oil and gas and telecommunications.

This annual meeting is mainly an opportunity for us to focus on our relationship with ASEAN as a whole. But that relationship has been substantially enhanced by virtue of the excellent bilateral ties we enjoy with each of the member states of ASEAN. An example of our commitment to these relations has been a continuing series of country-specific conferences, the next of which will be early next year on trade and investment in Singapore.

These contacts demonstrate clearly Canada's strong and continued partnership with ASEAN. We share so many common interests - in trade, investment and economic policy, in human resources development, and in many matters of international policy. These interests build naturally on the excellent relations we enjoy with member states individually, and I look forward to continuing our work together in the years ahead.