

It gives me great pleasure to be here today and have the opportunity once again to address a major conference on economic and trade relations with the Pacific. From my point of view one contrast between this engagement and the one in Vancouver over a year ago, is that I now head a much expanded Department of External Affairs -- one which brings together under one roof the policy planning and management of all aspects of our foreign relations: political, economic and trade, cultural, social and so on.

I expect some of you may have questions about the value of this recent change in relation to your specific business interests abroad. I can assure you, however, that this major reorganization of government in the field of external relations is of real meaning to you as businessmen.

And why? Because first and foremost this reorganization is an effort on the government's part to strengthen our ability as a nation to bring greater benefit to Canadians from our interaction with an increasingly complex, and often unpredictable and difficult international environment. As a country which earns almost one-third of its Gross National Product through trade, we must be ready to make those institutional adaptations that respond best to our domestic priorities and the changing global environment.

We all agree, I am sure, that economic development must be a number one priority for all governments in Canada, provincial and federal alike. Consequently my colleagues in Ottawa continue to take various measures in a number of areas designed to stimulate and shape this development. The bringing of trade responsibilities within the Department of External Affairs, but under the immediate direction of a Minister of State for Trade, is part of this economic strategy. It responds to a real need to make economic and trade considerations, and the interests of Canadian business, a more integral part of our overall foreign policy in accordance with the priority, in domestic terms, of economic development.

At the same time, Canada faces increased challenges abroad that require a more integrated and sophisticated management of our policies on a wide range of problems. Everywhere, success in trade has become more dependent than it ever has been on a combination of political and economic factors, creating a more complex environment for business: state-to-state trade is growing; those who believe in trade liberalization are fighting against threats of resurgent protectionism; the development world -- the so-called South -- are using political means via-à-vis the North to realize their economic aspirations by aiming at the creation of a