Close relations and global challenges

The increased visibility for Canada in Europe is also a function of the similarity of positions of the two on global issues. While inextricably linked with the U.S. at the geographic and economic levels, Canada has voted with the EU on 50 out of 52 United Nations General Assembly security resolutions in which the EU members had a common position last year, while the U.S. voted with the European bloc only 21 times.

Canada was shocked and saddened by the terrorist bombings in Madrid. Effective, consistent and coherent international action and cooperation is essential to prevent further attacks and to eradicate situations that foster poverty and inequality. That is why Canada and the EU will continue to work together for a revitalized UN system, and to seek agreement on rules to protect people from civil conflict and state failure. Canada and the EU continue to develop deeper relations and cooperation in justice and policing, working to increase the legitimate movement of people between Canada and the EU to encourage mobility among our citizens, while at the same time enhancing safeguards to combat illegal migration.

Jeremy Kinsman, the Canadian Ambassador to the EU, says that Canadians and Europeans need to show the international community that they can deal with "hard" as well as "soft" security challenges. "The fact that today's great and destabilizing dangers—poverty, diseases, trafficking in humans and drugs, environmental change, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons—have no regard for borders requires us to work within common international strategies," he says. "We can perhaps provide a model for a more collective, multilateral approach."

The importance of protecting the natural environment is also a key shared concern. Canada and Europe are cooperating in researching alternative energy sources and taking steps to combat climate change. In addition, there is a need to explore all means to conserve fish stocks. Canada is undertaking measures to curb overfishing in the area off Newfoundland and continues to work closely with the EU to pursue improvements in the behaviour of fishing fleets.

The Canada-Europa dialogue

Canada's economic and political relationship with the EU is comprehensive and long-standing. In 1976, Canada was the first non-European country to sign a framework agreement on political cooperation with what was then the European Economic Community. Over the years, the Canada-EU relationship has been strengthened by a host of other agreements in areas such as education, customs, competition, science and technology, and nuclear matters.

Fireworks are seen over a monument to Hungarian kings at the Hero's Square of Budapest as Hungary celebrates the EU enlargement.

In the context of globalization and the new world order, the relationship between Canada and Europe faces new demands and offers new opportunities. Government of Canada delegations visiting Europe last fall and again this spring met with government, business and civil society contacts to explore the building of new bridges between modern Canada and an expanded Europe. "Canada is committed to cooperating closely with Europe to achieve our common goals in a number of areas, from business and international security to trade and culture," says Paul Dubois, the Assistant Deputy Minister for Europe at Foreign Affairs Canada. "We have struck an ambitious road map for future cooperation."

People-to-people links

Canadians and Europeans have a long history of connections. This year, Canada and France are marking 400 years of continuous relations, dating back to Pierre Du Gua de Monts' arrival at Sainte Croix Island, with famous cartographer Samuel de Champlain, to establish the first French settlement in North America.