

I am delighted to have been asked to address this international business symposium particularly in light of its theme "The Borderless World — Thriving in a Global Economy."

As Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), I advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs on Asia-Pacific matters and assist the Minister of International Trade in his efforts to open up Asia-Pacific markets to Canadian business. In this role I am constantly reminded of just how truly borderless the world is becoming. The trend towards globalization that has affected international business is unprecedented. The wide array of trade and investment ties between Canada and the rapidly growing economies of the Asia-Pacific region amply demonstrate this. I offer my compliments to the sponsors of the symposium for having selected such a relevant and appropriate theme for tomorrow's session.

Trade — exports, investment and technology transfer — is central to sustaining Canadian prosperity. The export of Canadian goods and services accounts for over one-quarter of Canada's gross domestic product. Directly and indirectly, exports sustain over two million jobs in Canada. Most importantly, the export sector has been the most dynamic element in stimulating economic growth in Canada. For all these reasons, international business development holds a high priority on this government's economic agenda.

Considerable progress has been made in recent months in bringing down trade barriers. We have had a successful conclusion, after almost seven years of negotiation, to the Uruguay Round of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]. We have committed ourselves to the North American Free Trade Agreement — NAFTA.

We have also worked hard to build bridges to Asia-Pacific markets through such vehicles as the Action Plan for Japan and extensive trade missions to the region. We are members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum and we hold annual consultations as a partner country with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Government is taking seriously its responsibilities to manage Canada's presence in the global marketplace.

As our trade grows, we frequently encounter political conditions that are different from those we enjoy in Canada. We respect time-honoured traditions and cultures, but as Canadians we cannot turn aside from violations of human rights. As a Government, we raise our concerns in this area with our trading partners. We shall continue to do so.

I must point out, however, that trade and human rights are not mutually exclusive. In fact, trade itself is a force for human rights. Increased attention to political rights invariably moves forward in tandem with economic liberalization. Governments that open their doors to international trade are more sensitive to the views and reactions of others. Greater economic freedom encourages the growth of political freedom.