

I do hope that parliamentarians will hold public hearings across the country and will invite Canadians, not only to submit briefs and testify before the committee, but also to establish a dialogue with the Government through the members of that joint committee of the House and the Senate.

We will also invite Canadians at large to play an active part in this review. On March 21 and 22, we will hold a national forum, here in Ottawa, on Canada's international relations. This forum will be sponsored by my colleagues, the Minister for International Trade and the Minister of Defence, and myself. The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, will preside at the opening of the forum.

More than 100 Canadian personalities from different walks of life, who represent different organizations, different groups, will be invited to thoroughly examine, in workshops, the major directions of our foreign policy in light of the overwhelming changes of recent years. Their comments will be extremely useful to us in assessing our foreign policy. We should be able to determine which policies continue to serve our interests and which should be redesigned.

After the forum, the Government will ask the joint parliamentary committee to undertake its own review of Canada's foreign policy, taking into account what will have been said at the forum, and to make specific recommendations. I hope the committee will have the opportunity to hear the diverse views and opinions of Canadians across the country.

Meanwhile, together with my colleagues, the two secretaries of state and the Parliamentary Secretary, I will continue wide-ranging consultations with all those who are interested in international issues, especially the international development assistance program.

The recent annual human rights consultations with non-governmental organizations were very productive for us in preparing for this year's meeting of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The recent International Development Week was more than a mere listening exercise for me; it enabled me to pursue and develop co-operative ties with our partners. We intend to continue in that spirit, because many people in non-governmental organizations follow Canadian foreign policy and contribute to Canada's good name throughout the world by serving Canadian interests abroad in a worthy and very substantial way.

I would like to emphasize in this House the importance that I attach to the consultation process. The Forum and the work of the joint committee will certainly not be the last step in this consultative process. Indeed, the Government intends to pursue these consultations, as I was saying, and we hope that it will