

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to comment on what will undoubtedly be recorded as one of our most significant accomplishments at this meeting; namely, an agreement to establish a centrally funded secretariat for APEC.

Canada has taken an active interest in this issue from the outset, not least because we are convinced that the nature of the institutional mechanism that we design for APEC will ultimately determine the extent to which APEC can realize its full potential as a vehicle for expanding economic co-operation in the region. Indeed, in the long run, we believe that the kind of institutional arrangement that we set up is at least as important as the decision to proceed with its establishment.

In Canada's statement on this subject last year in Seoul, we called for the creation of a forward-looking institutional mechanism that reinforces APEC's defining characteristics; that is, a group of economies that have profound economic linkages and shared interests, and an assembly of ministers with significant economic responsibilities. Specifically, we expressed our view that APEC's secretariat should fulfil five key functions:

- 1) stimulate dialogue,
- 2) mobilize research and analysis,
- 3) become an Asia-Pacific economic resource centre,
- 4) serve as an administrative secretariat, and
- 5) project a distinct, constructive and influential role in the international community.

The aim, Mr. Chairman, was to ensure that an institutional arrangement for APEC is not limited to simply arranging meetings and providing administrative assistance. Instead, we have argued that APEC's secretariat should serve to strengthen the multilateral character of APEC and provide the analytical and professional support necessary for it to fulfil the mandate that we set forth last year in the Seoul APEC Declaration.

We are of course delighted by the progress that has been achieved on the institutionalization issue over the past year. This should pave the way for the establishment of a secretariat that allows APEC to fulfil its potential and make a substantial contribution to issues of international trade and economic relations. We look forward to working closely with our APEC colleagues and, in particular, the incoming United States Chair, in helping to get the secretariat up and running over the coming months.

For our part, Mr. Chairman, we in Canada are gearing up for the transformation of APEC, from a relatively loose dialogue to a formal institutional mechanism. We are developing a more focused approach to APEC within our governmental apparatus, and are integrating APEC issues into our formal private sector