

ii) Political

The Canada-EC relationship is formally based on two agreements: a 1976 Agreement on Economic and Commercial Co-operation, and the 1990 Transatlantic Declaration. The former has involved annual joint meetings for Canada's foreign and international trade ministers with their European Commission counterparts; the latter includes semi-annual meetings for the Prime Minister and the SSEA.

On many important international issues, EC member states act together as a block after they have achieved internal agreement on a common position. This requires Canada to keep abreast of developments both in member states' capitals and in Brussels where EC activity is concentrated.

The EC's major political challenge is the integration of the Central and Eastern European democracies who, thus far, have been disappointed in their hopes of coming under the EC's economic and political umbrella. There is no alternative but to rely on the EC to perform this function on behalf of the world community.

Rather than leaning toward building a new order, there has often been an element of confusion within the EC, most tragically in the case of the world response to the disintegration of the Former Yugoslavia. In this instance, the common European political and security framework has run into conflicting national objectives, preventing the EC from taking the necessary actions at the appropriate moment. Canada continues to work with the EC toward the resolution of the conflict.