

Your Royal Highness, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome tonight our distinguished guest, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan and our other Jordanian friends with him. His presence among us brings back memories of the visit Maureen and I paid to his country last year: the warmth with which I was received by His Royal Highness and members of the Jordanian government; our stimulating exchanges on international issues; the great potential we identified for developing a stronger bilateral relationship.

In Jordan I found a country blessed with gifted statesmen: dedicated, courageous and visionary leaders who have worked hard to forge a modern state which remains true to its people, their traditions, their culture and their Islamic heritage.

Despite scarcity of natural resources and harsh environment, a vibrant economy together with a dynamic, cultivated and united citizenry bear eloquent witness to Jordan's accomplishments. These achievements are all the more remarkable in that they have been attained against a background of regional tensions, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict. More than any other factor this dispute has been the root cause of turmoil, acts of violence, and of open hostilities which have done a grave disservice to all the peoples of the region, blighting their present and future hopes.

Jordan has been especially fortunate in that its leaders have consciously chosen to eschew the sterile rhetoric associated with this dispute. They have devoted themselves to nation building, to the direct benefit of their country and its people. Jordan and Jordanians have long recognized the benefits that a true and lasting peace would bring to all states in the region. In the search for peace, King Hussein and his government have been in the forefront: they have actively sought to mould events and shape opinion, even when circumstances were discouraging and hopes for progress bleak. Their commitment has never wavered.

In recent months Jordan's leaders have been working diligently with those of other countries to convene an international peace conference under United Nations auspices. Their goal is to bring together all concerned parties from both within and without the region. Although full agreement has not yet been reached, progress has been made in overcoming substantial differences. Canada strongly supports these efforts. Such a conference, approached with boldness and goodwill by all participants, must provide a forum to facilitate direct negotiations among the parties to the dispute and thereby the achievement of peace with justice; a settlement which not only recognizes the right of Jordan, Israel and all other states in the region to live at peace within secure and recognized boundaries, but also the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.