

I am pleased to announce today that Canada, the United States and Mexico concluded last night two important agreements that will strengthen the co-operation among our three countries.

These agreements will enhance the protection of the North American environment and contribute to the maintenance and improvement of working conditions in the North American workplace.

They will also complement the stronger trading relationship already negotiated in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The NAFTA, as signed last December, already recognizes the three partners' commitment to high labour standards and already contains important environment provisions that go beyond any previous trade agreement.

But the agreements we have reached today will strengthen and extend that commitment.

The preservation and the improvement of our North American land, water and air, and the protection and conservation of our plant and animal life, are absolutely essential to our future well-being.

All three partners recognized that no country can afford to build its industrial base on a foundation of polluting factories, in a short-sighted attempt to get a quick competitive advantage over others.

Such behaviour is in nobody's interest. Hurting the environment and wasting resources hurts the economy and shackles future growth.

Canada, Mexico and the United States know that. The North American Agreement on Environmental Co-operation that we have negotiated is a pledge of our strong commitment to environmentally sustainable growth.

This agreement provides the positive assurance that the three NAFTA partners will enforce their environmental laws. Through this accord, we confirm a compact with our own citizens to maintain an environment that is clean, healthy and abundant.

The NAFTA partners also realized the importance of improving quality working conditions and good labour-management relations as our economies expand under the trade agreement.

Economic growth for its own sake, growth that loses sight of the human dimension of the workplace, fails to recognize that people -- their knowledge, skills and experience -- are our greatest wealth.