

been released from the tentacles of totalitarian regimes? How will the world meet their expectations?

One concrete step -- one that we can all benefit from -- is the enhancement and liberalization of international trade.

Canada continues to support the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations and its fundamental objective, the reform of the world trading system. This is the first multilateral round ever to incorporate the views and needs of a wide range of developing countries. What better way to stimulate growth and alleviate poverty? We all have the right to be frustrated by the narrow interests that have postponed the success of these significant reforms.

On a more particular level, Canada is pleased to share membership with four members of ASEAN (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines) in the Cairns Group, which is developing constructive proposals aimed at broadening trade in agricultural products -- still very important components of the economies of both Thailand and Canada.

At the same time these global and sectoral arrangements are being developed, more and more countries are seeking to enhance their economic opportunities by entering into regional trading arrangements.

In 1992, ASEAN Heads of Government agreed to create the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), to be phased in over 15 years commencing this year.

For our part, Canada has entered into a free trade agreement with the United States (the FTA) and we are currently negotiating the final stages of a broader North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Mexico.

Some people see this development of so-called regional trading "blocs" as a new set of barriers to trade. I disagree. First of all, the AFTA, NAFTA and FTA are all consistent with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

There is another major benefit from these regional trading zones. An analogy that one could use, perhaps, is that of the broader-based co-operative blocs that have developed, such as the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, the Organization of American States and, of course, ASEAN. These alignments have all gone through a number of stages -- not always positive, or progressive, but in today's environment they are excellent vehicles for co-operation on a variety of fronts.