

Madam Speaker, as my colleagues the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Defence and my fellow Secretary of State have all mentioned, the Government believes it is time for a foreign policy review, for a review of Canada's international interests, and in our domestic capabilities and constraints in pursuit of our interests. I have listened carefully to each of their remarks and would like to add my views on Canadian foreign policy and more specifically, on how it relates to my portfolio as Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific).

First of all, my role as Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) is to advise Minister [André] Ouellet on Asia-Pacific matters. My responsibilities therefore cover both geographic and sectoral issues, such as political economic matters and social development assistance.

Canadians recognize the need for job creation in Canada as well as the restoration of faith of Canadians in our economy. These two goals can be achieved to a large degree through an export-led recovery. Presently, about one quarter of Canadian jobs are directly related to exports. The Asian markets for pulp and paper, telecommunications and transport equipment, construction materials, agri-foods and petrochemicals present tremendous potential for economic growth in Canada. At the same time they meet the needs of many developing nations. Furthermore, the Asia-Pacific region not only provides markets for our exports, but it is also an important source for the technology, investment capital and skills with which we can enhance Canadian competitiveness.

Growth rates in much of the Asia-Pacific region during the 1980s were more than twice as high as the rest of the world. Asia's share of world income could rise from 24 percent in 1989 to 35 percent by 2010, and to over 50 percent by 2040. Canadian business must prepare to capitalize on the opportunities presented. If we fail to do so, then we as a nation risk the erosion of those institutions that have made Canada the envy of the world. Our success will depend upon our ability to achieve greater access to these markets and to develop initiatives that will result in the provision of the greatest possible competitive advantage to Canadian exporters.

As part of this effort, bilateral and multilateral economic and trade arrangements with countries in the Asia-Pacific region will need to be examined in the light of the major economic changes taking place. We must also recognize that an increasingly important element in Canada's trade and economic relations with the Asia-Pacific region will be the development of new institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation [APEC] forum.

Within APEC are included five of Canada's top ten export markets. As you can see, an active Canadian role within APEC is vital to our interests. I was pleased that my first official function as