

Thank you Mr. President - greetings everyone.

I think it is appropriate that I am speaking to you today about certain aspects of Canada's foreign policy and relations. I know these matters are of immediate importance and concern to everyone in this room.

When this government came to office three months ago we inherited a foreign policy that had not had a fundamental review for a decade. The conduct of Canada's external affairs has not been subject to an overall review for ten years. And in those ten years the world has been changing fast.

Power relationships have changed remarkably in the intervening period - the super-powers are subject to quite different constraints. The emergence of China into the world stage after a period of relative isolationist policy has changed the political map strikingly. The process of decolonization has been almost completed, with the resulting appearance of many new states - a number of which are recognizing that their size jeopardizes their aspirations to economic prosperity and even their national security. The successful imposition of enormous price increases by the international oil cartel known as OPEC alone has so changed the economic balance of the world that our perceptions of ten years ago are bound to be obsolete.

As the Government of Canada we have the responsibility, and as a government so recently elected to office we have the opportunity, to take another fundamental look at what the world is like today and where Canada fits in it. I certainly would not prejudge the results of such a review by saying we shall find that our existing policies will all be found wanting or inappropriate. Indeed I have been impressed with the flexibility that we have used in meeting many of the challenges of the changing world scene. Nonetheless I take it as part of my responsibilities as Secretary of State for External Affairs that we do a solid re-thinking of where we are going.

Perhaps you might be interested if I spend just a minute talking about the way in which I expect to have this review conducted. I cannot prejudge the results, but I can foresee the route by which we shall get them.

During the election campaign my party laid great stress on its commitment to more open and responsive government. One of the ways we promised to do this is by revitalizing our parliamentary institutions. Elected MP's are, after all, the direct representatives of the people and are the best channel the government has for keeping in touch with the thoughts and concerns of electorate. I intend to have our parliamentarians deeply involved in the review of foreign policy. To waste such a resource would be folly.