

Mr. Chairman:

Expanding the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s relations with non-member countries is in the best interests of all members.

Canada has pressed the OECD to develop its program of contacts with non-members because we believe that the OECD has much to offer -- and to learn -- from the major emerging actors in the world economy.

Through the unique abilities of the OECD, we can facilitate the integration of non-members into the international economic system, and promote and support economic and political reform.

No less important, dialogue with non-members, particularly those who are increasingly important trade partners, enables us to learn more about their economies and their policy-making.

The OECD's relationships with non-members vary, depending on the level of economic interaction. Canada strongly supports continuing this open yet differentiated approach. We have seen that a number of countries have moved toward much closer economic co-operation with the OECD as their economies have developed.

Mexico and Korea stand as clear examples. Both have become active participants in many OECD committees, making valuable contributions and drawing benefit from the experience.

Using the premise generally accepted in the OECD that potential members should be market-oriented democracies with large economies that interact significantly with current OECD members, we believe that Mexico is ready for membership now, and that Korea will be so in the near future.

Mexico has demonstrated its commitment to the values shared by OECD countries by implementing significant economic policy reforms, liberalizing trade, establishing the legal framework for abiding by OECD codes on investment, and by working to improve its record on human rights and environmental protection.

These major steps have made the Mexican economy more dynamic and have accelerated its interdependence with the rest of the world. This reinforces the importance for OECD dialogue and peer review on Mexican trade and economic issues for all of us.

From my own experience in negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, I am firmly convinced that Mexico is ready to be invited to join the OECD. It is in our interest as an organization as well as in theirs. We look forward to seeing our Mexican colleagues around this table at the next ministerial meeting.