

Together over the last several years, we have forged, in my view, a productive and balanced relationship. We have worked together and consulted on the MTN, GATT and Cairns Group. At our most recent senior officials meeting, our then Ambassador for International Trade, Sylvia Ostry, participated in a lively discussion with you on MTN issues. We were also delighted to receive a delegation of ASEAN officials who came to Canada in order to study our approach to MTN negotiations.

We have also established an ASEAN Canada Business Council in 1986. This body representing our private sectors participated in the Canada-ASEAN Joint Cooperation Committee meeting in Ottawa in April 1988. I expect them to join again in these deliberations on how to expand our commercial and investment links at the next meeting in Brunei this November.

I foresee more such meetings occurring in the future; not just between our businesspersons but between our educators, our artists, our media, and other groups which will benefit from the sharing of ideas.

Our development cooperation program has also matured to the point where we are engaging in much more ambitious projects either as further phases of successful projects, or as new initiatives in response to emerging development priorities of the region.

As I speak, ASEAN officials are in Canada acquainting themselves with Canadian telecommunications technology and studying at our universities. Meanwhile, Canadians are working with ASEAN experts here in the region, promoting and introducing Canadian technology in a variety of areas including fisheries, forestry and telecommunications.

Today marks the beginning of a new phase in Canada - ASEAN relations. I have felt for some time that Canada should be more visible within the ASEAN region. The new Centre will give us that higher profile. In particular, it will provide a focus and an anchor for our regionally-based initiatives and will expand our relationships beyond the official programs underway between our governments.

I see the Centre and its activities as serving both your own and our objectives. I want your guidance and suggestions on how it can help bring us closer together.

For you, it will provide easier access to Canadian organizations anxious to expand ties with the region. It will be a catalyst and the centre of a network linking Canadian and ASEAN interest groups in a wide range of activities designed to promote better understanding of our respective institutions, cultures and ultimately our peoples.