

It is my pleasure to welcome to Ottawa ministers and officials responsible for environmental matters in nine nations and the ten Canadian provinces. I am delighted as well as to see as special guests representatives of the Commission of the European Communities, the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe, the World Health and Meteorological Organizations, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. I welcome too several members of non-government organizations (and the media of many countries). We are here to examine an issue of world importance, the vital issue of acid rain.

It is gratifying to see a growing rekindling of the spirit of Stockholm of 1972, when the whole world dedicated itself to environmental renewal. That spirit has been battered for a time: recession, unemployment and austerity have resulted in preoccupation with the past and the present at the expense of the future.

However, your presence at this conference affirms the commitment of your countries to take action not only to protect your own environments but also those of friends and neighbours. You understand that the environment is indivisible and does not respect geographic boundaries. The well-being of this and subsequent generations depends on decisions taken now, while the problem is serious but manageable.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the North American situation where Canada and the USA need to work together to resolve a joint problem. Fully half the wet sulphate deposition in Canada is of US origin and we contribute about one tenth to the US problem. Unfortunately the decisions about who will pay the costs of the cleanup are not easy ones, and the US Administration has decided, at least for the foreseeable future, not to join us in a joint programme of emission controls.