

and willingness to live up to the obligations set out in the entirety of the agreement, including the provisions on environmental and labour standards. Each application to join the NAFTA will be judged on its merits. But NAFTA members are just starting out on a long journey. The details and modalities of how to approach accession by others are still, frankly, being discussed. It is Canada's position that membership in the NAFTA is open to countries outside the Western Hemisphere.

It is important to stress that the NAFTA does not erect any barriers to other countries. It merely removes barriers between the member countries. NAFTA cannot be compared to the European Union. There is no customs union or common external tariff. There are no devolved powers to a trilateral authority, nor is there a commission such as in the European Union.

Asian companies are well-positioned to take advantage of this new arrangement. They have demonstrated their agility and adaptability over the years. A larger, open market will bring them greater trade and investment opportunities in North America. The NAFTA is a response to globalization, not a shelter from it.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the following key messages:

- Canada is, in fact, an Asia and Pacific nation and is committed to being an active participant in the region, through innovative programs and projects such as our ASEAN regional development co-operation activities, the Asia Pacific Foundation, "Pacific 2000", education linkages, support for preventive diplomacy, and the Canada/ASEAN Centre.
- Canada's cultural tolerance and diversity are true assets. Canadians from all walks of life can learn from each other and Canadians of Asian origin have much to contribute, and have already contributed significantly.
- We understand the need to build better transpacific trade links to adjust to the new realities of the NAFTA, AFTA [the ASEAN Free Trade Area] and the new World Trade Organization. Canada is determined to contribute fully and effectively to APEC as the focus of regional trade liberalization efforts.
- Finally, all of Canada's work in the trade promotion field will be undertaken in close collaboration with the private sector, recognizing that governments can only establish an atmosphere conducive to expanded trade and help develop the right policy framework with the private sector ultimately being responsible for delivering the product.