

SOME COUNTRIES ARE NOW BEGINNING A SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS ON THE POSSIBLE NATURE AND SCOPE OF NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASIA PACIFIC. AS MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE, I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL FACTORS THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED AS WE EXPLORE INITIATIVES TO DEVELOP A CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION IN ASIA PACIFIC.

FIRST AND PERHAPS OF MOST IMMEDIATE IMPORTANCE, CANADA BELIEVES THAT THE GATT OFFERS THE BEST HOPE FOR THE GLOBAL TRADING SYSTEM. IT IS STILL MUCH TOO EARLY TO ASSUME THAT THE URUGUAY ROUND WILL NOT REACH A CONSENSUS FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF ITS BROAD AGENDA. SO, FOR THE NEXT TWENTY MONTHS OR SO ALL OUR ENERGIES MUST BE CONCENTRATED ON A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME FOR THE URUGUAY ROUND.

SECOND, ANY INITIATIVE TO STRENGTHEN REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS AMONG GOVERNMENTS MUST HAVE CLEARLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES. THE FOCUS MUST BE SHARPLY FIXED ON TRADE LIBERALIZATION TO PROMOTE GREATER ECONOMIC GROWTH. THIS OBJECTIVE MUST ALSO BE FULLY CONSISTENT WITH MULTILATERAL EFFORTS FOR THE LIBERALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE.

THIRD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE RESPECTIVE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENTS, BUSINESS AND ACADEMIC WORLD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS. THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE ACADEMIC WORLD HAVE PARTICIPATED THROUGH DIFFERENT REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE EVOLUTION OF ASIA PACIFIC COOPERATION. IN THE COMING MONTHS WE WILL WANT TO DECIDE WHETHER THERE IS A NEED FOR A MORE DIRECT AND FORMAL GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIVE ORGANIZATION.

FOURTH, THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS SHOULD BE OPEN. IT SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE SENSITIVITIES OF GOVERNMENTS AND EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS. IT SHOULD BE CAREFULLY MANAGED AND COORDINATED, AND BE BASED ON A CONSENSUAL APPROACH.