

First, the Asia Pacific region is important to us.

Second, we are important to Asia, and are capable of competing with the rest of the world.

Third, in spite of our abilities, as a country, we are not yet prepared to seize the opportunities Asia offers us.

It is this last point that I would like to explore. I would like to talk about both Government's role in improving our capacities to meet the Pacific challenge, and your role as businesses. In the end, unless you are interested and capable of competing in large and competitive marketplace that region represents, we as a country will fall gradually behind the world.

Signing and ratifying the Free Trade Agreement was a statement of confidence in ourselves. A conviction that we can compete with the best, that our exporters can be world-class. The Japanese and the Koreans and the Chinese all see us as a world class industrial power, so why should we perceive ourselves to be anything less.

If we are going to be world class, if we are going to compete with the best in the Pacific, we have to start doing some things differently.

First, we need the determination and persistence to go after the opportunities in Asia. We need to get to know the markets and to spend lots of time and effort establishing ourselves as credible suppliers. As many of you know far better than I, you cannot fly into Japan or Korea and sign a quick contract and fly out again. This means that you as business leaders cannot be satisfied with objectives that are too limited. You must aim high and recognize that achieving your aims will require a tremendous commitment. Some of you are already demonstrating this determination. As a result, terrific successes are being made in telecommunications, in consumer goods, in food products, in auto parts, and in specialized machinery. But the list need not stop there, nor should the winner's circle be as selective as it is today.

The Free Trade Agreement offers economies of scale and the wherewithal for growth. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that our American and our Japanese and our European competitors are not going to be satisfied with a corner of the Vermont widget market. They are aiming for global markets, retooling to adjust their product lines for Asian tastes. They are going for gold. So can we.