

and the European Communities. It is relevant to underline that this Agreement is unique among industrialized countries and that we are pioneering a new form of international economic co-operation.

Today is therefore an important milestone for us, and I feel privileged to have the honour to extend an official and warm welcome to the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, His Excellency Max Van der Stoel, in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Communities, and Sir Christopher Soames, Vice-President of the Commission of the European Communities.

I know, Mr. Van der Stoel, that your assumption on July 1 of the post of the President of the Council, added to your domestic responsibilities has made July an extremely busy month for you, and I am grateful indeed that you have made time in your heavy schedule to come to Ottawa for this occasion.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to Sir Christopher Soames, who has made a major contribution to the efforts which have brought about this Agreement. His support for the enterprise we had undertaken has been greatly appreciated by the Canadian government. I should also like to pay tribute to the work of the respective chief negotiators of the Agreement: Mr. Leslie Fielding for the Communities, and Mr. Michel Dupuy for Canada, whose negotiating skills are evident from a reading of the Agreement. To my regret, Mr. Dupuy could not be here today. His presence was required in Paris for a meeting of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation. I am very pleased, however, that Mr. Fielding was able to join us.

Having successfully met the first challenge by reaching agreement on the framework, we must now infuse it with life. This will be an important function of the Joint Co-operation Committee which has been created under the terms of the Agreement.

We do not expect things to change overnight, but we do hope that the Agreement will act as a catalyst to stimulate economic co-operation which will on our part involve not only the private sector but also the provinces. It is fitting, therefore, that today the representatives of the member states and of the European Communities share the table with representatives of Canada's provincial governments and private business, who will all have to play their part if the Agreement is to achieve its potential.

Thus, today's ceremony, far from being the end of a process, marks the beginning of a new venture. We now have a design and framework; it is now up to both sides to translate promise into performance.