

ASEAN's accomplishments and its role are unique. Founded in 1967 during a time of intense conflict in that part of the world, it has since developed into a flexible organization for co-operation and dialogue among its members and others on a variety of regional and global issues -- economic and political. Through an impressive mixture of political imagination and solidarity, it has become a singular force for moderation and peace.

Part of ASEAN's success has been based on the unique relationship it has developed with countries outside the organization -- its so-called "dialogue partners." Canada is one of those partners; the others are Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the European Community. Canada has been a dialogue partner since 1967. And I have had the pleasure of attending annual "dialogue meetings" in each of the six ASEAN capitals, most recently this July in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Those meetings are immensely useful. They give Canada a clear understanding of regional problems and ASEAN's perspective on global issues. And they have provided Canada the opportunity to outline directly our perspectives and concerns. That dialogue may not produce headlines. But it does help all partners solve problems before they become crises -- before they become headlines.

But the members of ASEAN have played an important role in dealing with crises as well. The leadership they have shown on the question of Indochinese boat people has been exemplary. So too has been the leadership displayed in helping to end the crippling and costly conflict in Cambodia. I pay tribute to the energy and vision of my colleague from Indonesia, Ali Alatas, whose untiring search for a just and lasting solution to that conflict deserves the highest praise. That effort, finally, may now be paying off.

Relations between ASEAN and Canada are strengthening across the board, on all issues and through many channels -- governmental, non-governmental and private-sector. The involvement of business is central to the relations between Canada and ASEAN. The ASEAN-Canada Business Council, the ACBC, established in 1986, is active in encouraging business links, and Don Olafson, Canadian chairman of the ACBC, is here tonight. The Council is holding seminars this week in Calgary, helping to highlight new opportunities for Canadian firms in ASEAN. We are also involving the private sector, through the ACBC, in the regular meetings between Canadian and ASEAN officials which occur every 18 months.