

Much of the discussion at these meetings centred on economic issues -- particularly on improving the international trading climate and, urgently, on the priority of achieving a successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN).

Canadians recognize that the ability to compete successfully in international markets is a key to our future growth and prosperity.

An important part of our international approach, one that I believe has created some concern for ASEAN countries, has been our focus on trade liberalization within our own continent, first with the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and now with the proposed extension of this agreement to include Mexico.

I want to assure you that these initiatives are consistent with the overall goal of broadening multilateral trade around the world. We wish to strengthen our economies in North America, which will provide more opportunity for ASEAN suppliers, not less.

And I believe that the visible success of ASEAN suppliers in markets around the world says that you will benefit significantly from a more open, more efficient North American system.

We are all aware of ASEAN discussions regarding increased regional trade co-operation in this part of the world. We hope that the ASEAN partners will also see such arrangements as part of the global effort to extend trade liberalization.

Distinguished Delegates, ASEAN is the most successful regional organization in Asia Pacific. In time, it could come to represent all the countries of Southeast Asia.

As the world searches for new models, new mechanisms, ASEAN stands as a testimony to the benefits of international co-operation and goodwill.

May your successes grow and may your efforts be rewarded.