

Canada is prepared to be part of the solution in Central America.

Despite some criticism at home, we have provided economic assistance to each of the five countries.

We have offered our unparalleled expertise in peacekeeping, one refined in nineteen international operations - in Indo-China, Cyprus, the Sinai, on the Golan Heights and elsewhere - to design the peacekeeping and verification mechanisms needed to maintain any peace.

An all-party committee of our House of Commons will be visiting the five Central American countries in April, to advance the peace process.

In addition, we would be prepared to apply our expertise within a particular country, if that were agreed by the five nations to be consistent with the Arias Plan.

Tonight, as we meet here, the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, is being honoured by an Award from the Americas Society in New York. That event and Secretary Sepulveda's visit following our consultations with the group of eight Latin American countries in Montreal earlier today, mark the importance of Latin America in Canada's foreign policy.

Earlier today, in Montreal, I had the pleasure of hosting a meeting with Secretary Sepulveda and our colleagues from the group of eight Latin American democracies. There we discussed a range of issues across a wide political and economic agenda: the global economic outlook, the multilateral trade negotiations, international debt, agricultural trade reform, as well as prospects for the consolidation of democracy in Latin America and for the peace process in Central America. These are the issues that currently challenge our hemisphere.

The global economy is moving through a period of transition. There is apprehension about the prospects for continued growth, about our ability to control inflation and to deal with debt.

But we are not impotent victims of circumstances. We can and must take control of the future. Recent arrangements whereby Mexico was able to reduce its external debt show that with imagination and determination we can look positively towards the future.