

Foreign Minister Castro, I must begin by thanking you and through you, the Government and Foreign Ministry of the Philippines, for the outstanding cooperation and support that Canada has received during the eight years you have acted as our Dialogue Partner. This period has seen the consolidation and impressive expansion of Canada's ties with ASEAN. The Canadian Embassy in Manila has received constant support from your Ministry. This has been crucial to our success.

I would also take this opportunity to thank our Malaysian hosts for their excellent arrangements. It was in Kuala Lumpur in 1980 that Canada first participated in an ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference. I am delighted that we have now come the full circle.

Mr. Chairman, since the last ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference in Jakarta, a new Government has come to office in Canada. This Government attaches the highest priority to developing relations across the Pacific. Thirteen members of our new cabinet are from the western provinces of Canada and look naturally to the Pacific region as areas of importance and concentration. The political stability and economic dynamism of Southeast Asia provide a point of optimism in a difficult international scene. As a Western Canadian, I am acutely conscious of the need to ensure that Canadian foreign policy takes full account of the impact that the countries of the Pacific Rim will have on Canada's future. This meeting has further convinced me that the highest priority must continue to be given to seeking new ways of working together productively.

As you may be aware, the Canadian Government is currently conducting a foreign policy review. A Green Paper designed primarily to provoke discussion and comment has been issued which stresses the themes of competitiveness and security - themes which are relevant to our discussions here.

In preparing for this Conference, I have been greatly encouraged -- not only in terms of the current Canadian relationship with ASEAN but also with the underlying trends which it reveals. Overall bilateral trade in 1984 reached almost 1 1/2 billion dollars (Canadian) -- a record level. Furthermore, ASEAN exports to Canada have increased even more rapidly than Canadian exports to ASEAN with the result that the two-way flow is now almost in balance. I believe that this demonstrates the sincerity of our commitment to achieving a healthy, fully balanced economic relationship with your countries.