

Mr./Madam President,

Your election to preside over the Fifth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development is an expression of the confidence which the participating nations have in you. Your task will not be easy given the important and complex economic and social issues on our agenda. We congratulate you in taking on the challenge and we pledge our support and cooperation to assist you in guiding the Conference to, we trust, a successful outcome.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Government of the Philippines for the truly impressive facilities and hospitality extended to us. It is our hope and expectation this atmosphere of friendship and cordiality which has been created in welcoming us, will continue to pervade our discussions throughout the Conference.

The Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs has asked me to express his regret that he cannot be here at this early stage -- for understandable reasons related to our electoral process -- but he asked me to convey to you, Madam, Mr. President, his most sincere wishes for a fruitful meeting.

In the context of the Arusha meeting of the Group of 77 earlier this year, President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania observed that change is not only desirable but inevitable. This theme, from one of Africa's most distinguished leaders, sums up Canada's central approach to what has become the gross disparities in income levels between wealthy and poor. The spectre of hundreds of millions of people still living in absolute poverty, cannot be tolerated by any thinking person. Change is also inevitable because we simply do not have the option of deciding whether to change or not. The process of change is evolutionary, continuous and, if we are to be frank with ourselves, frequently beyond the control of governments. What we must do is decide, within the limited ability of governments to intervene in these processes, and in the common interest of our increasingly linked economies, how we may attempt to influence the changes, prompting those desirable ones which can be accelerated, retarding those which need to be contained, steering those which can be redirected, to ensure that our evolving international economic order will bring benefits to all nations and all peoples. What we obviously cannot do is think that simply exchanges of words, or the drafting of elaborate resolutions, will in themselves have any impact on the world beyond our doors -- unless they are based on the realities of those forces which shape our world.