

Mr. Speaker:

I am privileged to take part in the Throne Speech Debate, to discuss certain of the initiatives we have undertaken in international affairs, in the first two years of this new government, and some of the challenges that lie ahead.

One of the reforms of this government was, precisely, to open up debate on foreign policy in Canada. On nine separate occasions, in our two years, my colleagues and I have taken advantage of Ministerial statements to allow Parliament to discuss international questions. In the four years before, our predecessors did not make use of that instrument to involve Parliament and Canadians. We established, for the first time in history, a means for a joint committee of this House and the other place to invite individual Canadians to express their hopes and views about what we should do in the world. The rules of Parliament do not oblige me to respond formally to the report that ensued, but in the spirit of our parliamentary democracy, I intend to table a full response, within the next few weeks.

Because we believe that one of the great untapped resources of Canadian foreign policy is the interest and expertise and concern of individual Canadians who want to help build a better world. This is an international country. Just look at this House. Our Speaker was born in Yokahoma; one of his deputies was born just outside Cracow. One of seven of our citizens has family roots in Eastern Europe. Fully one-third of Canadians are of neither French nor Anglo-Saxon origin.

We come from everywhere, and are thereby connected by a strong and human bond to perspectives and opportunities that more limited nations can't enjoy.

The personal tradition of Canadians has been to reach out to the world -- you see it in our missionaries; our merchants; the small army of Canadian aid and development workers; our businesses, building schools and dams and highways and extending technology on every continent; our soldiers, fighting for freedom in war, serving peace now. Personally, I will never forget the extent and the generosity of the Canadian response to the crisis of the boat people, cast adrift to die in the China Seas. That direct involvement in the world is as much a part of the Canadian character as our cultural diversity, our bilingualism, our history of triumph over hard geography. That is a tradition on which this government is determined to build.

We began with the extraordinary Canadian response to famine in Africa. The government mobilized quickly and, I believe, effectively -- but the people of Canada led the