

strategic position in Central Europe, and Canada has a long-standing interest in this part of the world and close ties with its people.

I will shortly be making the final decision on an Honorary Consul and hope that Mr. Flis, my Parliamentary Secretary, will be able to open the office in Sofia in the near future.

Canada recognizes that security in the modern world is multi-faceted. Beyond membership in regional security organizations, we are convinced that only true democracies can ensure peace, security and stability in Europe. This is why Canada strongly supports the European Stability Pact. I made this point very clear to your respective foreign ministers in Paris last week.

Again, let me wish you a memorable and productive stay in Ottawa. I am confident that we can learn from one another. Together we must identify the challenges facing Eastern and Central Europe and recognize the importance of democratic institutions in building your new societies. Thank you.