

It is in that spirit that our Standing Committee agreed to an officer of the Soviet Embassy attending this meeting as an observer. We were all extremely interested by General-Secretary Gorbachev's speech at Vladivostock. The Soviet Union has a unique opportunity to give substance to some of its declared intentions in that speech, by making a constructive contribution to the objectives of Pacific Economic Cooperation espoused by this Conference, positive economic collaboration in the region could provide a test for the Soviet Union regarding its long-term intentions with respect to the nations of the Pacific. Members of this Conference will, no doubt, watch developments between this meeting and the next one in Osaka. National Governments, including mine, will do the same.

I have read and endorse the Pacific Statement, which has been approved by the Standing Committee. It marks an evolution of Pacific Economic Cooperation and recognition that the process needs a little more structure. Until now, it has been appropriate to proceed in an ad hoc fashion. However, the time has come to consider a small permanent or semi-permanent secretariat and a more stable source of funds for the work of task forces. Anything contemplated should be modest, subject to review after an experimental period, and carried by both private and government funding, with contributions from all countries.

You have an effective programme before you, and I commend so many of you who have worked to put it in place. I know that what has driven you all to work hard on Pacific Economic Cooperation is the vision which you share of the Pacific Rim countries prospering through Economic Cooperation.

We all owe special thanks to the pioneers of any venture, the people who get initiatives going. An immense debt is owed those people who, in Canberra, and before, and since, have brought life and substance to Pacific Economic Cooperation. Now we are poised to move well beyond those beginnings.

Certainly Canada intends to recruit many new people to the cause of our Pacific relations, and to continue to enlarge the ranks of governments, academics, business leaders and commentators to whom the Pacific is a Canadian priority.

It has been an honour for me to be here this evening. I am proud that Canada is hosting this Conference, and I wish you the very best success.

Thank you.