

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning.

I want to speak today of some of the issues that are shaping the international agenda, and the stakes for Canada in those debates. In addition to reporting on the NATO Summit and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, I want to give you an overview of the questions I have discussed with many other Foreign Ministers over the past few months.

The issues before us are complex. We live in an age of contradiction, a period of high hopes and expectations -- but also an age when these hopes are shrouded in uncertainty. It is a period of turbulence at a time when we should be celebrating the achievement of stability after 45 years of Cold War. The momentous victories of the past two years are clouded by new fears and anxieties: about nuclear proliferation; the revival of narrow, nineteenth-century nationalisms; the fragility of reform in many countries; and the uncertainties of development.

In this kind of turbulence, there is not only change, but rapid, unpredictable and sometimes contradictory change. Our need to stay ahead of the curve has never been greater. We are setting foreign policy priorities, conscious that conflicting trends and unanticipated buffeting from unforeseen directions may cause mid-course corrections. The views of this Committee, and indeed of all Canadians, will be solicited and welcomed as we steer our course in the months ahead.

Haiti is a prime example of the turbulence of our times. A few short months ago, this small and impoverished country had apparently emerged from 200 years of virtually continuous dictatorship to begin to build a democracy. In late September, in a matter of hours, the democratically elected government was brutally overthrown in an attempt to roll back the clock.

Canada's reactions were quick and decisive. We have taken up this case aggressively in the Organization of American States (OAS) and in La Francophonie. We have pressed the case in bilateral talks to underscore the strength of our conviction that legitimate democratic government must be restored in Haiti.

Turning to the Soviet Union, turbulence and uncertainty are also likely to characterize developments for the next few years, with inevitable repercussions for Eastern and Central Europe. Thanks to popular determination and resistance to the abortive coup mobilized by President Yeltsin and other leaders, the people of the Soviet Union themselves will determine the political and economic shape of their country.