

Your Excellencies, the distinguished foreign ministers of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me first thank you, Foreign Minister Alatas, for your opening remarks on Canada's relationship with ASEAN [the Association of Southeast Asian Nations]. During the past three years, Indonesia has co-ordinated and managed our Dialogue relationship with skill and dedication.

Canada attaches great value to its privileged Dialogue relationship with ASEAN, one of the world's most successful regional organizations. The Canada-ASEAN relationship has become a broad-based political and economic partnership of mutual benefit that has evolved from Canada's early development-focused bilateral contacts with individual ASEAN countries in the 1950s. Our partnership continues to evolve and grow. Economic co-operation for shared benefit now underpins our relationship.

Our development co-operation now encompasses activities in forestry, agriculture, fisheries, marine environment, telecommunications and training. We aim to create the basis for self-sustaining long-term linkages. The Canadian International Development Agency's funding of the Canada-ASEAN Centre is one example of this. I look forward to exploring potential further areas of co-operation, such as in science and technology and environmental management.

At the official or government level, our Dialogue relationship has intensified and the pace of progress has accelerated. At last year's PMC [Post-Ministerial Conference] in Singapore, Canada and ASEAN signed a new Economic Co-operation Agreement to promote closer industrial, commercial and development co-operation. Reflecting the future direction of co-operation between Canada and ASEAN, this new agreement will foster greater private sector co-operation, assist in the liberalization and expansion of trade relations and target development to the mutual benefit of us all.

As a further indication of the intensification of the Dialogue relationship, meetings of the Canada-ASEAN Joint Co-operation Committee [JCC] this year moved from an 18-month to an annual cycle with the holding of the Ninth JCC in Ottawa in June. This meeting reviewed a wide range of economic and trade issues of mutual interest, from the completion of the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] Uruguay Round and creation of the World Trade Organization, to regional trading relationships (the AFTA [ASEAN Free Trade Area], the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and APEC [the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum]), to questions of market access. With the complexity and variety of issues under discussion, Canada regards the JCC as an important venue for policy dialogue with its ASEAN partners in the run-up each year to the G-7 [Group of Seven leading industrialized countries] Summit and the PMC. As we will be hosting the next G-7 Summit in Halifax, we especially look