

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests:

Once again, let me say how delighted Mrs. MacLaren and I are to be in South Africa at this important moment in your history. I must also thank you all for taking the time from your many preoccupations to meet with our visiting delegation here today.

It is a tribute to the commitment on both sides that we Canadians have travelled to South Africa to learn first hand the best way to participate in future economic relations with you, and that you have taken the time to share your views and perspectives on South Africa's way forward.

As the representative of a country that took a firm stand on apartheid, I want to extend our strongest congratulations to South Africans on the progress that has been made toward the achievement of a non-racial democracy. The abolition of statutory apartheid and the adoption of a non-racial democratic constitution have created an environment that now permits the establishment of new business links between South Africa and Canada.

As you are aware, Canada lifted economic sanctions against South Africa last September. Only the United Nations military embargo on trade in military goods is currently being observed. What impact has the lifting of economic sanctions had on our bilateral relationship? Frankly, we have turned the page. I can say with some assurance that we have now ushered a new era of bilateral co-operation, which I hope will be strengthened in the years ahead.

As a government, we have reinstated the full range of trade support measures for trade with South Africa. The most obvious example is the opening, last October, of the trade section of the Canadian Embassy in Johannesburg. It is currently staffed by four trade specialists, two from Canada. This is an important indication of our confidence in the new South Africa.

Export credit and insurance is now available to Canadian exporters to South Africa through the Export Development Corporation, which has now placed South Africa on cover for short- to medium-term coverage.

Officials of South Africa and Canada are reviewing the question of a Canada-South Africa double taxation agreement. I shall also be having informal discussions with South African officials, with a view to starting negotiations at a mutually agreed upon date.

From the perspective of South African exports to Canada, the lifting of the trade sanctions now permits you to sell your agricultural produce as well as coal, iron and steel products to Canada.