

alliances or institutions in a manner that could destabilize East-West relations, as Eastern Europe goes through a period of such convulsive change.

To reduce the level of arms on both sides, it is essential to enhance the confidence of each side in the intentions of the other. That is why we have volunteered to hold the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa. The opening day of this Conference has been set for February 12, 1990.

For our part, the message we conveyed is that we recognize that it is up to the Soviet people how they reform their own society, but we fully understand and actively support what President Gorbachev is trying to do. We believe strongly that it is in everyone's interests, including our own, that his reform efforts succeed and we are responding constructively to them.

President Gorbachev made very clear that the USSR was not looking for direct aid from the West. What the Soviet Union wished to have with Canada was a cooperative, mutually beneficial, political, economic and technological relationship because of the many natural similarities between our two countries and because of the experience we have in coping with many categories of problems that the USSR is now dealing with in a serious way.

The 14 government-to-government agreements that we signed earlier this week -- on issues from international affairs to the arctic to the environment to military and cultural cooperation to economics -- and the creation of the Canada-USSR Business Council lay a solid foundation for such a relationship. The billion dollars, plus, worth of projects announced by Canadian companies and their Soviet counterparts, Wednesday, are an extremely important part of building the new relationship. Personal relations between leaders are crucial in this age of interdependence, when all nations' interests intersect increasingly with those of other nations. As President Gorbachev stated, at the Political Declaration signing ceremony, an especially good start has been made in establishing a valuable personal relationship between us for the future.

Follow-up to the visit here will begin shortly with a visit to Canada in the new year of the Soviet Trade Minister Katushev. Mr. Clark and Mr. Shevardnadze have agreed to meet regularly; Mr. Shevardnadze will return to Ottawa in the new year for the Open Skies Conference. Prime Minister Ryzhkov has accepted our invitation to visit Canada. And President Gorbachev has, as well. Dates will be worked out in due course. On my return to Ottawa, Monday, I will report more fully on my visit to the Soviet Union to the House of Commons.