

Fourth, the Government wishes to lend its full support to regular exchanges between the parliamentarians of our two countries. Some initiatives are already under discussion and we will do what we can to encourage and assist in this kind of activity.

Fifth, I am announcing, as Mr. Ouellet did today in Ottawa, that the Government has decided to make it possible for Canadian non-governmental partners undertaking development activities in Cuba to draw on government development funds. In practical terms, this means that the full range of what we call partnership programs now will be available to Canadian NGOs and others in the non-governmental sector for work in Cuba, including academic institutions and Canadian businesses pursuing developmental objectives. Cuba will receive an additional \$1 million dollars in Canadian development assistance over the next year through the various programs that we support, including a \$100 000 Canada Fund.

Sixth, given the economic hardships endured by many ordinary Cubans, the Government will provide further humanitarian relief along the lines of what we announced in March 1994 and last summer. We, therefore, are arranging to donate a further \$500 000 to the World Food Program for nutritional assistance in Cuba.

Seventh, we will continue to expand our promotional support to Canadian companies pursuing business opportunities in Cuba. This includes an active government participation in major trade fairs, for example the Havana International Fair. Canadian businesses interested in exploring joint venture opportunities with Cuban partners will now have access to funding provided by the Industrial Co-operation Program of the Canadian International Development Agency.

These, essentially, are examples to illustrate how the Canadian government plans to give more weight to our relationship with Cuba. Each step is modest and reflects what we think is reasonable and affordable. Each builds on activities that are already in place; and each, I believe, responds to what many Canadians have told us they wish to see. As we move ahead, for this is certainly an ongoing process, other ideas will emerge. What I want to signal here is that Canada has interests in Cuba and is interested in Cuba. We want to take advantage of opportunities and we want to help Cuba create opportunities. Canada and Cuba will not agree on every question, whether bilateral or multilateral. We have disagreements with even our closest allies — but we are open for dialogue.

I wish you well in your conference. The participants you have brought together cannot help but stimulate creative ideas on how Cuba and the international community can interact more productively. I look forward to hearing the results. Once again