

Secretary Solana,

It is a great honour to Canada that such a large number of distinguished Ministers from Mexico would brave our winter to take part in the 7th meeting of the Canada-Mexico Joint Ministerial Committee.

This is a clear demonstration of President Salinas' decision to make improved relations with Canada a priority for his Administration, a decision which we applaud.

The range of bilateral issues being discussed during our meetings is wide and substantive. It includes:

- environmental cooperation;
- agricultural cooperation in livestock development, animal health and research;
- development of joint forestry projects;
- improved systems of statistics to better understand the full scope of the relationship between our two countries;
- enhanced tourism in both directions;
- increased Canadian trade and investment in Mexico;
- legal cooperation and joint action on drugs.

Those issues demonstrate the great potential which exists in the Canada-Mexico relationship. Your visit here is crucial to expanding and deepening our partnership.

Mr. Secretary, for well over 100 years, Canadian traders, investors, teachers and missionaries have been active throughout Mexico and the rest of Latin America. They have built railways and electric powerplants. They have helped to create banks and insurance companies. They have worked in developing agriculture and they have collaborated in building successful trade networks between the countries of the region and the rest of the world. And they have been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights in those countries where abuses persist.

For generations, Canadians have been partners in the development of the region. We have decided to become even more engaged in the years ahead. For Canada, Mexico is the key country in our pursuit of closer ties and increased understanding in this hemisphere.

Mr. Secretary, we are in the midst of a period of unprecedented change. In recent months, world attention has focused on the remarkable events taking place in Eastern Europe: the triumph of the human spirit, the collapse of dictatorships, and the opening of economies.

But these dramatic developments are but one part of a global phenomenon. Throughout much of the world - in Asia, in parts of Africa and in Latin America - democracy has won many victories and human rights are enjoying a welcome new respect. Here, too, societies are acknowledging the failures of command economies, and are turning to the market place in record numbers.