

Foreign Minister Wong,¹ distinguished colleagues:

I feel privileged to represent Canada at this Post Ministerial Conference for the first time, and to reaffirm a reinforced Canadian commitment to the principles of peace, prosperity and political development.

To determine the importance of Asia to Canada, we need only look at the trade figures. But the relationship, and the bonds between us, go much further. Trade has created economic bonds, immigration has created bonds of family and culture, and the increasing movement of our citizens across the Pacific has created a strong and lasting bond of friendship.

Even as we meet in an atmosphere of collegiality, however, political and military conflicts plague many parts of the globe. There are unprecedented demands on the UN [United Nations] system, on regional organizations and on individual countries for intervention and assistance. Quite frankly, our international institutions have been tested and found lacking. Witness Bosnia. Witness Burma. The verdict is still unclear in Somalia.

There are examples where the international community has succeeded in spite of odds stacked against us and widespread predictions of failure. Some of the best of these reflect the spirit and processes that the community grouped around this table represent. Just look, for example, at the positive developments that international co-operation has helped bring about in Cambodia. We are proud to have participated in this effort under ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] leadership, and I believe that we can learn from this experience and build upon it -- both regionally and globally -- in dealing with conflict prevention and resolution.

Canada is an active, committed player in the transpacific community. Our role in the world enables us to bring issues that affect this region to the table in international fora such as the G-7 [group of seven leading industrialized countries], and to carry the results of such consultations back to meetings like this one. We equally value the opportunity to discuss the relevance of global issues in the regional context, particularly at this formative time and in this spectacular setting.

Reform of our international institutions, rehabilitation of the UN's capacity to anticipate and manage crises, and the renewed and critical importance of checking the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the issues Canada took to the Tokyo Summit. We are convinced that they are equally relevant.

¹ Wong Kan Seng, Foreign Minister of Singapore.