

Canada values very highly its ties with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and attaches a great deal of importance to strengthening them. Our two countries have many things in common, including huge open spaces, and frontier areas which are still in the process of development. Despite the geographic distance which separates us, I firmly believe that there are extremely good prospects for the further enhancement of cordial and mutually beneficial relations.

Trade and economic cooperation is clearly one of these linkages. Canada looks upon the Kingdom as one of its most valued commercial partners. Both our countries have benefitted through the activities of firms such as Bell Canada International.

Increasingly, young Saudis are coming to Canada to complete their education. I believe that the person-to-person contacts that are thereby developed can play an invaluable role in promoting relations between us.

Canada, like Saudi Arabia, is an oil producer, although we do not have the Kingdom's vast recoverable reserves. Despite any differences we might have in approach, we have a strong shared interest in maintaining a stable international market for this vital commodity.

Saudi Arabia has over the years proven itself to be a force for moderation and peace. The Kingdom's leaders have done much to move the peace process forward through such initiatives as the Fez Plan. Canada strongly supports the concept of peace with justice which it embodies, including a homeland for the Palestinian people.

Saudi Arabia has also been in the forefront of those nations wishing to bring an end to the Gulf war. That bloody and senseless conflict has caused the death and injury of hundreds of thousands and untold destruction. We share the view that Iran should take up Iraq's offer to seek a negotiated settlement, so as to avoid further misery and destruction.

I should also like to note that the Canadian International Development Agency and the Saudi Fund for Development have worked together in many Third World states. Together Canada and Saudi Arabia have striven to build a better life for those less fortunate than the citizens of our own two countries. Ties of friendship, mutual interest, and shared concerns increasingly draw the two of us together.

You and the many other Canadians living and working in Saudi Arabia play an important role in this process. You are all ambassadors of goodwill. Through the sensitivity you show to different cultures and customs, through the many friendships you make, and through the dedication and professionalism you display in your work, you bring Canada and Saudi Arabia closer together. We are proud of you.