

As I have said before, there is no simple answer to the question of how best to define and promote Canada's national interests abroad. However, to be coherent and effective, our policies must be comprehensive, our activities in all fields -- economics and trade, aid, political and cultural -- must be part of a dynamic whole and be seen to be so by the countries of the region themselves. They must also be seen to respond not only to their own interests but also to the unique aspirations and specialized requirements of the Asian and Pacific countries. To achieve this demands improved understanding at all levels and the growth of mutual awareness between Canadians and the peoples of Asia and the Pacific.

In the market opportunity workshops during this conference, you have been reviewing some of the factors that make marketing, investment and joint ventures different and sometimes difficult in each of the markets covered by this conference. The lessons learned in one place do not necessarily apply to its neighbours. You will have recognized too that decisions in the realm of trade and economics cannot be taken in isolation from the unique political, cultural or security circumstances that pertain both in the region as a whole and in the individual countries themselves, in particular where governments play an active role in local decision-making. Our activities in all these fields are interrelated and must be treated as such. This is an integrated fabric of our foreign policy.

Partnership is a two-way street and if we are to expect the countries of Asia and the Pacific to take account of our concerns we must demonstrate that we are alive to their interests. Our policies and activities must be increasingly responsive not only to our own interests but to the specific priorities and aspirations, political, economic and cultural, of the countries concerned.

Our relationship with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an excellent case in point. Late last year we committed ourselves to a formal policy of co-operation with ASEAN when we signed an Agreement on Economic Co-operation. But the sense of common interest goes beyond economics and trade. ASEAN leaders have acknowledged the importance of Canada's support for ASEAN efforts to bring about peaceful solutions to the problems of the region, political, humanitarian as well as economic. In particular, we have supported ASEAN initiatives in the United Nations on the question of Cambodia. On this issue we share the belief with ASEAN that without a comprehensive political settlement there will not be durable peace and stability in Southeast Asia. On the humanitarian side, ASEAN has made it clear that Canada's refugee policy in the region has made a major contribution to relieving pressures in the region.