

Our relations with the United States are, inevitably, of premier importance because of the intense interplay between our two countries. Seventy per cent of our trade is with the United States. Policy decisions taken there may profoundly affect our economy. The centres of power in that country are dispersed and the decision-making process complex. Our relations with our southern neighbour thus require constant attention. We cannot afford to ignore what happens there.

Europe and Asia are also major partners in trade and investment. We have worked assiduously to broaden and deepen our relations with these countries — for their own sake and because of the alternative opportunities they offer.

Other relationships are also important. We feel we have an important vocation in Africa of which I shall speak later. But we also have interests which go beyond our bilateral relations.

— Our security requires stability in East-West relations. We seek it both through participation in a common defence system with the United States and Western Europe, and by active support for arms control and disarmament.

The decisions involved are often difficult ones. We took part in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) decision to follow a two-track policy: to seek a reduction (or the elimination) of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe and, failing that, to proceed with the deployment of such weapons by NATO, in response to those already installed by the Soviet Union. Let there be no doubt that Canadians, and the Canadian government, favour the arms-reduction rather than the arms-deployment option, and unreservedly endorse the proposal for an interim agreement which the United States tabled in Geneva on March 29.

— To grow as an industrial economy, Canada must find markets for its manufactured, high technology products as well as for its raw materials and semi-processed goods. That means building constructive relations with potential trading partners, and working for a liberal trading environment. It means keeping our markets open to foreign goods — no easy task, for politicians, when foreign imports disrupt local production and cause unemployment.

— As individuals, Canadians welcome cultural, political and economic ties with countries which share our languages and traditions. That is a major motive for working with our Francophone and Commonwealth partners.

Our lives, as Canadians, are richer and fuller as a result of our exchanges with them. As you know, I visited your West African neighbours in Guinea, Mali and Cameroun before coming to Nigeria, in order to promote co-operation with them, as well as with your country.

That reflects Canada's dual vocation as a bilingual country. It is part of the fabric of our relations with West Africa. It heightens our interest in the efforts you are making to strengthen co-operation within West Africa.