

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you this morning. Yesterday, we concluded a very successful meeting with members of your government's Cabinet, and I can assure you that friendship between Canada and Mexico has never been stronger than it is today. Yesterday's discussions provided an intensive review of important bilateral issues -- a review that increases our understanding of each other and opens the path to future co-operation. Canada and Mexico have pursued these close consultations through regular meetings of our Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) since 1968. That work was injected with new energy in January 1990 when Mexican and Canadian ministers with economic responsibilities met in Ottawa. As demonstrated then and confirmed yesterday, these face-to-face meetings of ministers of our two governments present an invaluable opportunity to explore new avenues of common interest.

An important component of our discussions concerned economic and commercial issues. Like Mexico, the Government of Canada has been pursuing policies that will make our economy more competitive. Through privatization, de-regulation and tax reform, we have improved Canada's economic foundations. We have also been following a vigorous outward-looking trade policy that includes the Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN), the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA), efforts to enhance our trade with Asia-Pacific nations and, of course, the negotiations for a North American Free Trade Agreement (FTA). These policies represent the grand framework of our trade relations. But large concepts usually work only when we pay attention to the particulars. That's what meetings like this JMC meeting are meant to do. When we look after the details, the larger objectives are easier to achieve.

Canada and Mexico have an excellent record of looking after the details. We have developed our co-operation in a number of fields. For example, our law enforcement agencies are working closely together to suppress the scourge of drug trafficking that has caused difficulties for both our countries. We are increasing our cultural co-operation in important ways, a subject that I will return to in a few moments. Last April, in Ottawa, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney signed an important agreement on taxation that ensures that the citizens and companies from one country operating in the other get the same fair tax treatment. Our Parliament is currently drafting the necessary legislation, which will go into effect after it has been approved.

Canada is also working closely with Mexico in the area of forestry conservation and management, an important undertaking in this era of heightened understanding of the need to manage our natural resources carefully. That awareness extends to the environmental front, where we are also intensifying our relations. All governments have become conscious in recent years