



innovative ways within Canadian foreign policy. The strategy is still in its early stages, but specific projects are already in the works. To cite just one example, in 1997 Winnipeg will be the site of a national conference of Canadian and Asian young people, "Asia Connects/Cherchons l'Asie." Up to 12 other sites in Canada will be linked electronically to the Winnipeg conference, creating "virtual communities" of young people across the country. It is this kind of innovative use of information technology to link Canada to the world, and to advance our foreign policy objectives, that an international information strategy will promote.

In both these areas, the need for new ideas and for informed debate to keep us on the cutting edge is

clear. The National Forum has already launched the debate and will, I hope, continue to drive it forward. The Forum is the venue in which to start putting flesh on the bones of these two initiatives, by proposing specific tools for implementing them. The democratization of international relations - their opening up to actors other than the traditional nation states - will, I believe, come to be seen as one of the characteristics of the new era that we are entering. The existence and the work of the National Forum on foreign policy is a harbinger of that trend. I look forward to working with you all to develop a Canadian foreign policy fitted for the 21st century.

Thank you.