

together a relatively small number of countries that share geography and have common interests. We have focused our initiative on the North Pacific with this in mind.

In the North Pacific we find four of the world's great powers; we find a full range of relationships across a broad range of issues, some of them marked by considerable tension, in some instances military tension. Yet, unlike the other sub-regions of Asia Pacific, which have at least some level of dialogue above the bilateral level, there is currently none that addresses a broad range of issues among the North Pacific countries.

We do share membership in several international and regional organizations, a dozen or so. That is quite an impressive figure, but none of these is a forum that allows for discussion of specifically North Pacific issues of common concern.

Whether a co-operative security dialogue involving governments is possible in the North Pacific is still a question to be answered -- I hope your deliberations in the next few days will help make the matter clearer -- but these factors do at least help to demonstrate a context and a need.

No one can deny that real and potential problems exist in the North Pacific. There are border disputes, areas in which there is armed confrontation, refugee problems, poverty, environmental degradation, issues about resources both on land and under the sea, vast social and demographic problems, international drug trafficking and others that cross international borders and even oceans. At the same time, we are witnessing politico-economic changes of enormous importance, not only in the relations between the superpowers but as a result, for example, of the prominence of Japan, the increasing role of China and the growing economic strength of many parts of the region.

There is a direct relation between security and prosperity; each can guarantee the other, and when one is absent the other is threatened. Unequal levels of economic development threaten political security, just as conflict is the enemy of prosperity and growth. North Pacific states have a tremendous investment in the growing prosperity of the region, and it is only prudent that we make every effort to secure that prosperity.

Canada is deeply committed to and supportive of the efforts of countries on the Pacific Rim to work together, especially in trade and economic areas, as is happening so effectively in APEC, the Pacific Basin Economic