

Mr. President, fellow Governors, distinguished Guests,

It is a great honour to be elected to chair the Board of Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank at its 31st Annual General Meeting. I would like to express my deep gratitude to our colleague from the Netherlands for his country's accomplished chairmanship throughout the past year and for his skilful handling of the proceedings to date.

I am also particularly pleased to be able to welcome you to the city of Montreal, whose vitality and sophistication provide an ideal setting for this Bank to begin a decade which will be decisive for the development of the Americas.

Canada is a full and active partner in this hemisphere. We are also a nation deeply committed to strengthening multilateral institutions. So for us to chair this Board is both an honour and a responsibility.

It has become a cliché to say that we live in times of rapid and profound change. But that is also an understatement. Change has become the constant in world affairs. Things we used to think were unchangeable have now changed massively and suddenly. These changes have brought new hope to peoples around the world - in Eastern Europe, in Southern Africa, in Asia and in this hemisphere. One challenge is to live up to the opportunity provided by this unusual moment. There are high expectations among ordinary people, around the world - expectations that governments will now grapple successfully with problems they once said were unmanageable because of the animosity between East and West.

There is also another type of challenge. It is the challenge to redefine our concept of security and to adopt strategies accordingly which recognize that issues once hidden by the East-West conflict now cry out for solution, and are more urgent than ever.

These issues include:

- the deterioration of the environment;
- the plague of terrorism;
- the proliferation of regional conflicts and of weapons of mass destruction which can make those conflicts more lethal;
- the international drug trade;
- the persistent crisis of under-development and over-population;