

Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to represent Canada at this important conference. I know that Canada has had, for the past six annual meetings, a perfect record of attendance. Therein, I believe, lies a tangible sign of Canada's commitment to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and to the Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC) process.

Canadians are encouraged by the expansion of the ASEAN process and take particular pleasure in welcoming our new partner in dialogue -- the Republic of Korea.

We also salute our hosts for their foresight in inviting distinguished representatives of the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China as guests to the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.

Canadians clearly recognize the success of ASEAN in advancing dialogue on issues of regional and international importance and we fully support the development of new forms of discussion on issues of common concern.

Distinguished Delegates, we are living in a world where change is the only certainty. But change can ensure progress towards a better future for the citizens of our respective countries and for the wider world community.

Key to that change is the direct involvement of the people in the decisions that will shape their lives and those of generations to come.

In Canada, at this time, we are undergoing a process of constitutional renewal through a broad dialogue among the Canadian people, a dialogue that includes a serious evaluation of our political, economic, social and cultural institutions. In our 125th year as a sovereign nation, we regard this process of renewal as healthy and essential to our continuing development as a prosperous and democratic country in the future.

In other countries around the world, democracy is seen as more and more fundamental to stability and prosperity.

Real and continued prosperity in this region depends on the expansion of political rights, liberties and responsibilities.

Modern states need recognition of both the rights and the duties of their citizens. When rights are infringed, or when duties to the state are felt to be too onerous, the people withdraw their support from the Government and the fabric of society is weakened.