

The purpose of this review is not only to prepare Canada for the new century that is approaching, but also to enable Canadians to participate in the country's foreign policy.

We held a two-day national forum on Canada's international relations. This forum brought together about 200 business executives, representatives of non-governmental organizations, journalists and professors to discuss the directions this country's foreign policy should take.

We have asked Parliament to review Canada's foreign policy. The joint committee is currently travelling across the country to gather ideas from our people in this regard.

On five occasions over the past six-month period, we have asked Parliament to debate important issues concerning our foreign policy.

By doing so, we hope to restore to Parliament and its members a leading role in the conducting of this country's business.

During the debate that we had in this House on the review of Canada's foreign policy, I emphasized that our main duty in Europe is to contribute toward establishing economic and democratic structures and to guarantee Central and Eastern European security.

I have just returned from Paris, where along with your foreign ministers I participated in the inaugural conference on the European Stability Pact. This initiative reflects the importance we attach to a prosperous and peaceful future for Europe.

Five years after the momentous events of 1989, you, fellow parliamentarians, are engaged in building new societies. You expect meaningful, tangible assistance. This seminar expresses, I believe, Canada's determination to share our expertise and experience in an endeavour critical to your political and economic reforms: the effective functioning of Parliament.

You are faced with uncomfortable legacies of the old period. These cannot be denied or suppressed. Instead, they must be dealt with honestly by new parliamentarians. From Estonia to Ukraine and south to Sofia, many assemblies have constituencies which are nervous, even fearful about the future. Recent history tells us that Parliament and its proceedings can easily be exploited to stall reform and innovation.

I trust that this seminar will reinforce your confidence in the rightness of your democratic choice and help to ensure that your own parliaments continue to serve your citizens so that they do not attempt to seek refuge in extremist solutions or the discredited ideologies of the past.