

Your Royal Highness, honourable Ministers, friends and colleagues.

Thank you, Your Highness, for your warm words of welcome. It is a great pleasure to be in Brunei Darussalam to join you, your ASEAN colleagues and other dialogue partners.

This is the fifth Post Ministerial Conference in which I have had the privilege of participating personally. I have been here almost as long as Marshall Siddhi, and you yourself, Your Highness. To Canada, ASEAN is an invaluable instrument of economic development and regional security.

Canada has been involved in Asia since before our own Confederation, more than twelve decades ago. As a former colony ourselves, we were active in assisting many ASEAN nations make the difficult and exhilarating transition to independence. Through the Commonwealth, we helped devise the Colombo Plan in the late 1940s, perhaps the first great multilateral cooperation effort of the modern era.

From 1954 to 1973, in Indochina we participated in the international supervisory and control commissions, and learned lessons applicable today, as we face a new opportunity to achieve a durable and comprehensive political situation in Indochina.

Marshall Siddhi will recall that, in 1979 in Geneva, at the first Indochinese Refugee Conference, Canada was the first country to pledge to resettle refugees. We continue in that course. At the Conference last month in Geneva, so ably chaired by Dato Abu Hassan, the Honourable Barbara MacDougall pledged Canada to resettle a minimum of 16,000 longstayers over the next three years. To date, over 125,000 Vietnamese refugees have found homes in Canada.

Canada's relations across the Pacific have multiplied many fold since the days of the Colombo Plan. Asia Pacific is now Canada's largest trading partner after the United States: 50% of Canada's non-U.S. trade is with the nations of this dynamic region. Asia Pacific is Canada's largest source of new Canadians, providing fully 50% of our new immigrants. I recently presented a report to Parliament on Canada's relations with Asia. The inescapable conclusion, from my inquiries among Canadians, is that Canada's Pacific identity is thriving and expanding.

Your Highness, ASEAN has time and again demonstrated the value of consultation and collective action in pursuit of common objectives. The PMC discussions have made a strong contribution to improved understanding and the advancement of the goals which we all seek as open, tolerant societies committed to prosperity and peace.