

Before I get into the substance of my discussions with Saudi leaders, I want to say that I am delighted to have had this opportunity to escape the Canadian winter and visit Saudi Arabia. I wish to express my warmest thanks to my very kind host, Prince Saud, who together with his colleagues and officials, has gone out of his way to make my stay here both pleasant and memorable. I should also like to stress how deeply honoured I was to be received yesterday by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Fahd with whom I had a most interesting exchange of views.

I think all of you are aware that this is my first visit to the Middle East. I have just come from Cairo where I was received by President Sadat. I had very useful talks with Foreign Minister Fahmy and other leading members of the Egyptian Government; during the next few days I plan to stop in Jordan, Iraq and Israel. My purpose in coming to the Middle East is to obtain at first hand an appreciation of the problems, achievements and aspirations of the different countries of this region which everyone acknowledges has had and continues to have a major place in world history and politics. As the homeland of Islam and as a country whose economic importance is increasing rapidly, Saudi Arabia is an essential part of my itinerary.

In my comprehensive talks with Prince Saud and other ministers we have sought to find ways and means of further developing the very friendly bilateral relations which already exist between Canada and Saudi Arabia. Our approach has been first to identify various key economic and other objectives of our two countries and then to proceed to a discussion as to how each country can contribute to the realization of these objectives. In this connection, Saudi authorities have briefed me on the impressive aims of the country's five-year development plan and I have outlined Canadian oil import needs, investment policies and willingness and ability to contribute to the fulfilment of Saudi development plans in a number of key sectors. Our discussions have revealed that there are many and wide-ranging possibilities for Saudi-Canadian economic co-operation and that both countries are able and willing to seek closer and mutually advantageous relations. As a gauge of the seriousness with which both sides intend to pursue this goal, I am very pleased to announce that the governments of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Canada have decided to establish a Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Co-operation. Prince Saud and I have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on this subject and it has been agreed that this committee will hold its first meeting in early summer in Ottawa. As a further indication of the growing bilateral ties between our two countries, Prince Saud has given me the very welcome news that a Saudi Ambassador to Canada, to be resident in Ottawa, will soon be nominated.

With regard to international economic issues, we have in particular discussed the prospects for the Conference on International Economic Co-operation which got underway in Paris last month. Given the fact that this important conference was