

Mr. Chairman, your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to address this joint meeting of the Indonesia-Canada Business Council, the Canadian Business Association and the Canada-Indonesia Business Council.

I have to come back to Jakarta for a second time within a month -- this time, ~~to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation~~ [APEC] Ministerial Meetings, which will be followed by the Asia-Pacific Leaders meeting in Bogor this coming Tuesday. During our deliberations over the past two days, we have discussed a number of issues that will affect the future economic growth and prosperity of the region, the most important of which is the need to reaffirm our commitment to the early ratification of the World Trade Organization.

I congratulate the Indonesian government for having done so already. In Canada, we introduced our legislation in our Parliament on October 25 -- legislation that is supported in principle by all of our main political parties. I fully expect that the World Trade Organization legislation will be approved and enacted by the end of the year. I look forward to others, particularly to our largest trading partners, doing so quickly as well. This remains the world's number one trade policy priority.

Beyond this, we have come to Jakarta to chart the future direction of APEC as we stand on the threshold of the Pacific century. Here in Jakarta last month and again over the past two days, Ministers declared clearly that we are ready to challenge ourselves and our world trading partners to start the process of further trade and investment liberalization. APEC has already commissioned and received some excellent outside advice on this issue, in addition to that which we received from our officials. Both the APEC Eminent Persons Group and the Pacific Business Forum echoed a central theme: this region's increasingly critical role in driving the world economy. Both underscored our fundamental commitment to freer trade and investment as the engine of future growth.

Still, a number of questions remain unanswered. Are we looking for APEC to drive global free trade forward by accelerating liberalization on a MFN [Most Favoured-Nation] basis? Or are we aiming for a more comprehensive -- but regional -- free trade area? Can we deepen our integration while broadening our membership? How will APEC relate to other existing free trade areas, especially to the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]? We have created a mechanism and a structure that seems to be moving forward by its own momentum. We have yet to define a destination.

There have been long discussions about when the APEC process should be completed. A more salient issue is when -- and in what ways -- the process should begin. Only by moving forward, only by maintaining the momentum coming out of seven years of Uruguay