

On behalf of the Canadian Government I should like to extend a very warm welcome to the Delegations from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations that are here today for the inaugural meeting of the ASEAN-Canada Joint Cooperation Committee. I welcome you to Canada and to Ottawa, and I welcome you to the Lester B. Pearson Building. I know that you have a long and very full agenda, but I hope that you will have some time to experience the rejuvenation that comes with spring in the Ottawa Valley.

I feel a particular sense of satisfaction in opening this meeting and in welcoming you here today for this event marks the maturing of a process in Canada's relations with ASEAN that I had a modest part in initiating the first time I served as Secretary of State for External Affairs. I vividly recall the trip I made to Southeast Asia in 1976 when I announced in Jakarta that Canada would like to open a formal dialogue with ASEAN. It is a source of great pleasure for me, therefore, to be associated with another step in the development of Canada's relations with ASEAN.

Since its beginning in 1977 the Canada-ASEAN Dialogue has become an important element in Canada's expanding links with the Asian and Pacific world. On the political level we value the consultations that take place regularly, especially the ministerial discussions which follow the annual ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting. I am looking forward to attending the next round of those discussions in Bangkok in June.

Canada has had a long and intimate association with Asia since the Second World War - from being a founder member of the Colombo Plan to being a member for some twenty years of the various International Commissions in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The experience of this Association which arose from a concern for peace and stability in Asia and the Pacific has demonstrated that the best contribution Canada can make is to help strengthen the capacity of governments in the region both individually and collectively to meet the developmental