

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to be here today. As you may know, this is my first official visit to Japan and Asia since my appointment as Foreign Affairs Minister last November. This, however, is not the first visit by a member of the new Canadian government to Japan and the region. Visits by the Governor General, the Minister for International Trade, the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, as well as the Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific) prove that the new government has indeed recognized the importance of Japan and the Asia-Pacific region in all aspects of its trade and foreign policies.

The appointment by the Prime Minister of a Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, who assists me in my work as Foreign Affairs Minister, also reflects his personal commitment to developing Canada's relations with the countries of Asia, including, of course, Japan.

The Prime Minister made this quite clear in Seattle last November. Indeed, the APEC [Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation] Leaders' meeting was the Prime Minister's first international function.

The purpose of my visit to Asia is to strengthen the commitment of our government to the region; to strengthen our bilateral relationship here and to express our desire for co-operation in multilateral fora. I am very pleased that I could begin this tour with Japan. Later today, I will travel to South Korea and next week I will attend the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] ministerial meeting in Bangkok, including the historic first meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum to discuss security issues. I will then proceed to China and Hong Kong.

Here in Japan, my meetings with Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama, Minister of International Trade and Industry Ryutaro Hashimoto, Minister of Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono, and the Director-General of the Self Defence Agency, Tokuichiro Tamazawa, were very productive. In each encounter I stressed the importance of our bilateral relationship and discussed the challenges facing our two countries. I was particularly pleased to continue the dialogue with Foreign Minister Kono, begun earlier this month in Naples.

Please allow me to expand a bit on these points.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF JAPAN FOR CANADA**

### **Political Relations**

Politically and economically, Japan and Canada are key interlocutors and partners in multilateral fora of prime importance to both of us, such as the new World Trade