

Speaking still about the United Nations, I want to say that in a more immediate context, I confirmed that as host of the Conference on Human Settlements to take place in Vancouver later this month, we had signed an agreement with the U.N. governing our responsibilities as host country. I expressed confidence that the Governments I visited would participate actively in both its preparation and at the Conference itself and received welcome assurances in this respect. I look forward to renewing contact on the occasion of HABITAT with a number of the Arab leaders I met during my trip.

Naturally, I drew a certain number of conclusions from the impressions and thoughts I brought home with me from the Middle East. Perhaps the most significant of these is my conviction that our long-term bilateral relations with the Arab countries can, and should, be pursued independently of the Middle East conflict, a conflict which may in the past have clouded our perception of the general willingness and the opportunities that exist to expand and strengthen our relations with that part of the world.

I amply confirmed the usefulness of the personal contacts I established with my various hosts, and deeply valued our in-depth discussions, not only on matters of bilateral interest, but also concerning their countries' positions and perceptions on regional and multilateral issues. I am delighted that my counterparts in each of the host capitals accepted my invitation to visit Canada and I look forward to the opportunity to return the gracious hospitality they so warmly extended to me and my officials.

Although I have devoted most of my remarks today to Canada's relations with the four Arab countries I visited in January, I hardly need to remind this audience that Canada's relations with the Arab world are, of course, much broader. For instance, our relationship with the Maghreb states is well established and we hold regular consultations with the three countries of that area.

Furthermore, we have had, for the past ten years at least, programmes of technical and economic co-operation with Tunisia which have become the most important among those we have established in francophone Africa. Also, to promote the full range of political, economic, and cultural relations between our two countries, the Canada/Tunisia Mixed Commission was established in 1968. This intergovernmental consultative mechanism meets once a year, alternately in Ottawa and Tunis, and held its latest annual sessions in Ottawa less than three weeks ago.