

In other areas, we may simply want to use WTO instruments to achieve our objectives, for example, the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement.

We need to have answers to these questions prior to embarking on negotiations.

A second question concerns how to achieve the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. What approach do we use?

We shall of course build upon the various subregional agreements already in place. The liberalization accomplished through existing subregional agreements will obviously make our task easier to achieve. In that connection, we warmly welcome Chile's decision to accede to the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]. We would agree to extending NAFTA membership to other countries that can undertake its obligations.

Although we shall naturally build upon the liberalization already achieved in existing agreements, we cannot expect to complete our negotiations by 2005 by passively waiting for these agreements to "converge simultaneously." In short, Canada does not see the negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas being achieved by countries joining an already existing agreement.

The Free Trade Agreement of the Americas can only be achieved through deliberate action by all countries in the Hemisphere.

If we are to finalize negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas by 2005, it will be necessary to commence negotiations in all or at least some areas by 1997.

To meet this target, we as ministers shall need to have decided by then on the approach we intend to pursue.

- Is it a negotiation among existing subregional agreements, bloc to bloc?
- Or is it the classic approach of a new hemispheric free trade agreement open to all 34 participants?

Although we do not need to answer these questions today, we need to start our discussions.

Can we agree that at our meeting in early 1997 we shall decide on answers to such questions, and today charge our officials with conducting the required analysis in good time for that meeting.

I look forward to hearing the views of my colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.