

This meeting in Copenhagen provides the opportunity to consolidate the triumph of the democratic ideal in Europe, to help render permanent what is now being accomplished. A substantive concluding document should express our common ideals and our common political will to maintain and build upon freedom for all the peoples of Europe.

Democracy is not defined by activities. It is defined by attitudes and by responsibilities. Democracy is not just the right to vote or the right to speak freely and associate with others. Those rights can be present and democracy can be absent. The essence of democracy is the full and free participation of people in their government. It is based on the supremacy of the rule of law. And most fundamentally, it is grounded in the habits and beliefs of citizens - their social consciousness and social conscience, their tolerance of political, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and their respect for the rights of others.

Democracy cannot be declared or invented overnight. Democracy grows. And to grow, it must be nurtured. Leaders must respect it, citizens must demand it, and everyone must value it. Democracy cannot be imposed by the State from above; it is something which must be lived daily from below. It is the responsibility of every citizen to choose leaders wisely, to exercise rational judgement, to demand accountability and above all to avoid apathy.

During this meeting Canada will sponsor or support a number of proposals essential to a concluding document designed to consolidate democracy.

Central to democracy are free elections, the existence of vibrant and truly independent political parties, an honest and just electoral system, and the right of every citizen to participate freely in the electoral process. Together, we must commit ourselves clearly here in Copenhagen to those fundamental democratic institutions.

It is also important that we enhance co-operation between all our societies to promote the development of democracy. Therefore, the concluding document should call on participating states - as well as institutions, groups and individuals within our societies - to co-operate in building strong and lasting democratic governments.

It is essential to democracy that there be an unequivocal commitment to the rule of law. Democracies must be governed by laws that are universally applicable; and they must also be infused with a universal respect for that law. Central features of such a system of law include an independent and impartial judicial and legal system, the separation of powers among agencies of government, the unfettered right of redress of all citizens against the abuse of authority, an impartial public service where appointment is open and advancement is based on merit, and a respect for the fundamental political and civil rights of all citizens, including the freedom of speech and assembly. It is essential that the concluding document contain a clear reference and strong commitment to the rule of law.