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Statement delivered by

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(Senator of Parliament, Canada)

My name is Senator Joseph A. Day from The Senate of Canada. I am accompanied by my colleague, Mr. Bryon Wilfert, Member of the House of Commons of Canada. We are delighted to participate in the 27th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) in Cebu City, Philippines. Thank you for allowing Canada to be here as an observer at this meeting of AIPO.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to again meet with our parliamentary counterparts from Southeast Asia. These annual meetings provide us with a unique forum for following events in the region and making the personal contacts that are so important to good relations between countries.

With each passing year, the Southeast Asian region is becoming more and more important to Canada. It is a growing source of immigrants. It is also an increasingly important trading partner.

This increased exchange of people, goods, and services between Canada and the countries of Southeast Asia is leading to increased cooperation in a whole range of areas.

In addition to sharing concerns about the international trading system, we also have common interests in the areas of security, the environment, sustainable development, and information and technology cooperation.

Parliamentary diplomacy has a crucial role to play in encouraging this cooperation. By keeping each other informed of developments in our countries and our parliaments, we help make the exchanges between us run more smoothly. By understanding each other better, we can help reduce the distances between us.

As you probably know, Canada's relations with the region go back over half a century, to the years following the Second World War. Our earliest contact was with our partners in the Commonwealth – Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and Singapore. Indeed, it was through the Commonwealth's aid initiative of the 1950s – the Colombo Plan – that Canadian co-operation in Southeast Asia began. As well, during the 1950s and 1960s Canada participated in the International Control and Supervision Commissions in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

In the late 1960s, Canada identified Southeast Asia as a priority recipient of Canadian aid. Our trade with the region grew during this period, and in 1974 Canada initiated relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In 1977, Canada became an ASEAN dialogue partner.

Today, the Canadian government maintains a dialogue with ASEAN at the ministerial level through the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference and the ASEAN Regional Forum. In addition, Canada maintains

two dialogue channels at the senior official level – the ASEAN-Canada Dialogue Senior Officials’ Meeting and a Senior Economic Officials’ meeting.

The relationship between Canada and Southeast Asian countries has evolved into a flourishing trade and economic partnership.

Indeed, Canada’s two-way trade with ASEAN countries now exceeds Cdn\$10 billion per year.

Meanwhile, nearly half a million immigrants from ASEAN countries now call Canada home, and the number of Southeast Asian students in Canada continues to increase rapidly.

There is no better recent example of the partnership between Canada and Southeast Asia than Canada’s response to the devastating December 2004 tsunami.

The Canadian government contributed Cdn\$425 million towards disaster relief, rehabilitation assistance and reconstruction efforts, in addition to Cdn\$213 million was contributed by members of the Canadian public.

I would like now to touch briefly upon the topics for dialogue with observer countries to take place tomorrow.

First of all, though, I would like to point out that, as Canadian parliamentarians, we do not set government policy. Nevertheless, we do play a role in international relations, mostly through the work of our parliamentary committees. Our committees conduct studies, during which we solicit ideas from experts and the Canadian public. The reports we issue at the conclusion of these studies can help the government define its policy, and they can also have an important role in helping the Canadian public understand the issues at play. Those reports are available on the Internet for all who are interested.

Meeting our counterparts from other countries plays an on-going part in the work of Canadian parliamentarians to understand issues and influence government policy.

We look forward to discussing these issues with you during our dialogue tomorrow.

On the issue of regional security, Canadian parliamentarians recognize that in this day of global integration, security problems in one part of the world can have serious impacts in any other part of the world. Regional conflicts, people smuggling, health pandemics, arms and drug trafficking – all these activities can have an impact on Canada’s security, as well as your security. Consequently, we need to work closely with one another to address situations that might lead to problems, either here or elsewhere.

As a case in point, Canada has a long history of participating in peacekeeping missions in all regions of the world. It is also a leader in the international movement to ban landmines. As I mentioned earlier, during the 1950s and 1960s Canada participated in the International Control and Supervision Commissions in the Southeast Asian region.

More recently, Canadian contributed armed forces personnel to the International Force in East Timor and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor.

The Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs looked at Asia Pacific security issues in 1998 as part of its report on the Asian financial crisis.

The issue of economic and trade cooperation is clearly a vital part of the relationship between Canada and the countries of Southeast Asia. Canada has always been a trading nation. Initially, our trade was largely with Europe. Today, the United States is our largest trading partner.

Nevertheless, Southeast Asia presents a significant opportunity for Canada.

Your economic progress has been impressive: the ASEAN countries represent a market of some 560 million people. The discussions of which we have heard a lot this morning about a proposed East Asian trade bloc make the subject of trade cooperation all the more timely.

As your countries increase their cooperation among themselves and with their partners in Asia, Canada would like to increase its presence in the region. Increased trade would also help narrow the development gap in some of the ASEAN countries.

Our parliamentary committees have devoted a considerable amount of time to studying the issue of trade with Southeast Asia. In 2003, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade issued a report entitled *Reinvigorating Economic Relations between Canada and Asia-Pacific*. In 1997, the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs released a report entitled *The Importance of the Asia Pacific Region for Canada*.

The issue of investment opportunities is another important one for our economic relationship. It is also an important component of economic growth and development in the region. More than that, foreign investment creates important links to Southeast Asia for Canadian companies, consumers, and workers.

Today, Canadian foreign investment in the ASEAN region is worth more than Cdn\$11 billion. These investments represent a vote of confidence in the region by Canadian business people. Of course, in order to invest, companies need to be able to count on sound investment rules that provide stability, transparency, predictability, and protection for Canadian companies. For that reason, Canada has consistently supported a strong, rules-based system.

Environmental issues are increasingly important components of our relationship. Canadians are mindful of the impact natural disasters can have. The tsunami, the recent cyclones in China, and Hurricane Katrina in the United States remind us how quickly disaster can strike.

By cooperating with each other, we can reduce the impact of such events. In our discussions, we hope to learn more about the measures you are taking to prepare for natural disasters and to reduce the impact that human activity is having on the environment.

The issue of information and technology cooperation is the key to solving many of the world's problems. By sharing best practices, we can help each other deal with on-going and evolving problems.

An example is the international effort to combat Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS, in 2003. By sharing information, we were able to reduce the spread of this virulent disease. Likewise, the on-going effort to understand avian influenza shows that the fight against these infectious diseases has to be an international one, one that requires cooperation in sharing information.

Information and technology cooperation is relevant to many of the dialogue topics that we are discussing. When it comes to protecting the environment, for example, information and technology will be crucial in mitigating the effects of climate change. Clean energy technologies hold great promise for minimizing humans' impact on the environment. Developing alternate sources of energy and renewable sources by using technology such as small hydro power, solar thermal systems, and biofuel, such as mentioned last evening, will help developed countries and developing countries alike in their quest for energy self sufficiency.

On the issue of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round, Canada remains committed to more liberalized trade, the rules-based multilateral trading system, and the objectives of the Doha

negotiations. Like you, we were extremely disappointed when the Round was suspended. A successful outcome of the Round would have advanced the Canadian objectives of increased access to global markets for Canadian producers, manufacturers, and service providers. It would also have been good for developing countries, which stood to gain from further integration into the world trading system and from the reduction in agriculture subsidies.

Our parliamentary committees have spent considerable time studying the WTO and the international trading system. **In May 2002, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade released a report entitled *Building an Effective New Round of WTO Negotiations: Key Issues for Canada*.** More recently, in June 2005, the Committee released a report entitled *Elements of an Emerging Markets Strategy for Canada, which included recommendations on the WTO negotiations.*

I would like to talk a little bit about the Canadian government's development assistance in the region. The Canadian International Development Agency's Southeast Asia Regional Program addresses development challenges that affect the region. It is a small, focused program of approximately Cdn\$12 million a year. Its priorities, in terms of assistance, are: economic integration, the environment, and governance, security, and the rule of law.

The program helps countries meet the requirements of accession to, and/or membership in, the WTO and to benefit from their rights as members. It has also supported governance and legal-reform projects that have raised awareness and observance of the rights of women, children, ethnic minorities, and migrant workers throughout Southeast Asia.

In addition, Canada has bilateral development programs with Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Finally, on the subject of the exchange of parliamentary visits as means of strengthening inter-parliamentary diplomacy, my colleagues and I feel that visits to meetings such as this go a long way to promoting understanding and mutual respect among parliamentarians.

Canadian parliamentarians participate in a number of parliamentary associations and interparliamentary groups including the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum, to which a number of ASEAN countries belong. Canadian parliamentarians also cooperate with Singapore and Malaysia through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The Inter-Parliamentary Union provides another venue for cooperation. Finally, there is La Francophonie, which includes Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, as well as Canada.

Earlier this year parliamentarians from a number of ASEAN nations participated in the Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians' Conference on Environment and Development, which the Speakers of the Canadian Senate and House of Commons hosted in Whistler, British Columbia.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for welcoming us to this gathering. Through the meetings, both formal and informal, we have had and will have with you, our Southeast Asian colleagues; we develop a better understanding of the issues you are facing.

We will return home with much to ponder. Please rest assured that we will continue to follow developments in Southeast Asia.