

international stage. He has been following the situation in Central America very closely. When I mentioned my invitation to address this conference, he asked me to pass along his appreciation for your work in support of the United Nations, which I do willingly.

This past decade has seen a dramatic increase in the role of Latin America on the world economic and political scene. Major countries, such as Mexico, Venezuela, and Brazil, have become more active in international affairs, particularly in North/South dialogue, energy issues, trade, and economic development. Latin America has become an increasingly attractive market for exports and investment; but at the same time the debt problems of several countries have raised concern and required action by the international community. In the field of peace and security, the dangers of wider international conflict have been raised by confrontations such as that over the Falkland Islands and by the turbulence of change and revolution in Central America.

Unfortunately, the first task in approaching Latin American questions must still be to counter the widespread tendency to see the region as homogenous. The differences in population, geography, political and economic development are often lost in popular impressions of the region. The all-too-common image of turbulence, repression, and economic disorder in the whole of Latin America is a distortion.