The idea of looking at how international economic institutions perform was a major issue among G-7 [Group of Seven leading industrialized countries] Leaders at Naples. It will continue to be a key theme of Canadian efforts in the lead-up to the Halifax Summit. We need a broad look at these institutions — how they function, how they are financed and what their new mandates should be in a world of globalization and diminished national sovereignty. We need to address the key linkages among development assistance, trade and investment. We need to ensure that critical new issues — such as mass migration and population — enjoy the priority and attention they merit, while taking tough decisions on institutions that have outlived their mandates at a time when governments in all regions of the world are facing resource constraints.

This is clearly the case in the Asia-Pacific region. Canada is interested in Asia-Pacific security because we see that important Canadian interests, including economic and trade interests, are served by stability in the Asia-Pacific. And we do not underestimate the ripple effects that can spread insecurity from one region to another, particularly when we are talking about a region as important as the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, we believe that the Asia-Pacific security dialogue, with the participation of non-Asian countries that have legitimate interests in the region, can be an important stage in the building of inter-regional understanding, and hence, greater security. The ASEAN Regional Forum, the first meeting of which I attended in July in Bangkok, was a pivotal occasion for beginning the process of building a transpacific multilateral security link. Canada has a special role to play here, just as we did in helping to build transatlantic links such as NATO after World War II.

Let me turn now to a future exploration of what we must do to address the changing and expanding challenges to international security in its broader definition.

If we look at the entire range of formal and informal institutional regimes available to the international community to address these security challenges, we can see that the demand is often for rapid intervention, a kind of internationally sanctioned fire brigade to dampen the blaze. But the realities are complex. In the case of natural disasters, the central issue is marshalling resources to provide aid and see it through to delivery. Humanitarian systems are getting better, though more could and should be done in the area of advance preparedness. In the case of war, there is increasing reluctance to intervene militarily, given past experiences, even though intervention may be the only way to douse the flames. We might ask ourselves, for example, whether the French intervention in Rwanda was a useful contribution to ending that terrible conflict. We can marshall other instruments, such as economic sanctions, to put pressure on belligerents. But as we have seen in Haiti and Bosnia, it is an uncertain prospect at best.