

maximize the benefits (including bilateral) which accrue from membership of these bodies. We have sought to diversify and extend the levels and scope of our bilateral relations for improved access to markets, to satisfy other development needs and in keeping with the principle of good-neighbourly relations between states, but are often impeded by financial constraints.

Geopolitical realities of the Caribbean Basin now might not be significantly changed by the year 2000. It is to be hoped, though, that the crisis which threatens Central America and from which tension and instability could radiate to — or be perceived as affecting — the Caribbean, will be peacefully resolved before then. Despite the recognized socio-economic roots of the crisis in Central America, one cannot ignore the complexities introduced by the East-West conflict. Nor can one ignore the constraints imposed by that conflict on the formulation and implementation of foreign policy by the Caribbean Basin states whose strategic location heightens their significance to external powers. Ideological and systemic differences with neighbouring Cuba and concern about communist infiltration therefrom; political instability in some Caribbean island states and territories and the dependence of all Basin States on external metropolises are other inescapable factors of our geopolitical environment which impact on our policies.

Security concerns are not limited to these factors, though much concern has been expressed in some quarters about the ease with which governments of small states could be sabotaged or overthrown through mercenary action or externally supported rebel or dissident groups. The days are past when it was true to say “this could never happen in the Commonwealth Caribbean”. Yet it is not possible for our fragile economies to sustain military forces, equipment and installations for adequate response to such perceived threats. In this context, the concept of regional co-operation in the security field might satisfy some interests and needs. Other security problems arise from the abuse of and illicit trafficking in drugs, which are serious problems for several Caribbean states, Jamaica included. Already our countries have recognized the need for international co-operation to eradicate this greivous social malady and its dangerous international tentacles.

Equally, our governments have recognized the need for sustained development as a pre-condition for breaking the stranglehold of the problems which afflict the Caribbean Basin. They recognize that in development lies the key to sovereign action determined only by national interest and in keeping with internationally accepted principles. Development reduces dependence which in turn allows foreign policy flexibility. Sustained growth and development removes the threat of instability and the threat to local democratic institutions which could result from socio-economic deprivation and despair.

So we adopt strategies and orient our policies to attain development objectives. But these efforts take place in a rapidly changing environment which could negate or at best weaken our thrust. The impact of rapidly advancing technology and changes in the international economic environment are a specially severe challenge to small states, which are more