

We have also seen the burgeoning of regional groups and initiatives in recent years: Pacific Economic Cooperation and Pacific Basin Economic Council in which we participate; ASEAN and Contadora, which we strongly support; South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation which we are doing our best to encourage.

There are two striking things about these organizations or initiatives. First, they represent attempts by limited members of nations to grapple with common concerns. Membership is quite naturally not universal but defined by a common task orientation, or region, or development level. Second, these newer plurilateral organizations involve Canada to a remarkable degree, whether as active participant or as supporter.

That is, of course, entirely consistent with Canada's commitment to the universalist principle embodied in the U.N.. The Government made it clear in our first Throne Speech that broad multilateralism remains the cornerstone of our foreign relations.

Harsh criticism of the United Nations -- both in the General Assembly and in the specialized agencies -- produced what the Secretary-General described as a crisis of multilateralism. Fortunately most member nations believe that the UN remains essential, if sorely in need of self-examination and renewal. Members faced three options on UNESCO: pulling out, accepting the status quo, or demanding reform. Almost all chose the third. Certainly that was Canada's deliberate choice - a signal that we intend to be in the forefront of nations that support and reform the United Nations.

NATO is an example of an older institution that has survived the past decade remarkably well. Serious problems confronted the Alliance during this period. There were differences over allied approaches to Afghanistan and Poland, there were differing views over how to respond to Soviet ploys in arms control and how to deal with terrorism. The Alliance held together and was strengthened by these challenges. There was a growing recognition that differing views must be discussed candidly. The alternative to frank discussion clearly was the avoidance of key issues, and that the Alliance simply could not do. The Halifax ministerial is going to be a meeting driven by the real need to consult rather than by the imperative of generating a communiqué.

The conclusion I draw from all of this is that our well-established international institutions have done more than survive the turbulent events of the past decade -- they have contributed essentially to the managing of major issues.