

evolving institution whose members are responding to the realities of a changing political and fiscal environment.

But let me repeat -- Canada's commitment to European security remains strong. Witness 2,400 Canadian soldiers deployed in the former Yugoslavia and our contribution to the conflict management missions of the CSCE -- not to mention the millions of dollars we have provided in humanitarian assistance. These are not the signs of a country disengaging from Europe.

We welcome Europe's efforts to assume more responsibility for its security. The Western European Union (WEU) and the new European Security and Defence Identity complement NATO.

However, the WEU cannot replace the infrastructure, integrated command structure, assets and forum for privileged dialogue that NATO offers. Nor can it be a substitute for a security structure that derives strength and determination from a membership that encompasses not only Europe, but also Canada and the United States. The WEU can reinforce NATO, and, for its part, NATO can assist and support the WEU.

It is fashionable to criticize NATO and say that its time has passed. Canada does not share that view. A transformed NATO has a key role in European security. This becomes particularly obvious when speaking with our co-operation partners.

The North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) is an effort by NATO to reach out to those who have really become its most ardent supporters -- the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. These countries see the real need and value of NATO -- a uniquely effective collective security alliance -- at this time of upheaval.

The CSCE also has characteristics that give it an important role to play in European security. However, it has also become an easy target for criticism. People make facile arguments: the CSCE did not prevent Yugoslavia; therefore it is ineffective. In our view, these criticisms are premature.

The CSCE is the only regional organization that embraces all of Europe -- including the central Asian republics -- Canada and the United States. It is the only regional organization with a mandate that encompasses the co-operative security agenda -- from arms control and confidence-building to human rights, economic and environmental issues.

The CSCE played an important role in the twilight of the Cold War -- before NATO or the European Community (EC) had even begun to think about outreach. It was the institution that first embraced the new democracies and gave them a framework and a set of guidelines for moving forward with political and economic reform.