

There is progress being made. Of the 183 states now in existence, more than 40 percent could be considered as fully democratic, while 22 percent have authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. The others are only partially free. This means that more than 50 percent of the world population is now living under democratic regimes, compared to 35 percent only 10 years ago.

What is even more encouraging is that, according to current assessments, the situation is improving in 14 of the "partly free" or "not free" countries, while it is worsening in only nine countries. If it is true that democracies do not go to war against each other, we are surely making progress in making this world a more stable place.

Having just returned from South Africa, where a multiracial democracy is slowly, painfully but very definitely emerging—I was encouraged by my latest visit—I understand from first-hand discussions the sacrifices and the suffering necessary to build a democracy when different traditions, cultures and institutions have to be put in place.

These developments do not take place overnight, and certainly not in a country like South Africa.

It is true that, in times of economic duress, we might be tempted to pass the torch to someone else. It is true that we have to put our own house in order, and, unless our economy is competitive and prosperous, it will be difficult to maintain our standing on the international scene.

But I do think that constructive multilateralism must remain a fundamental of our foreign policy and we must not retreat from it. As a middle power, we cannot afford to play high-level power politics or to be squeezed by a system of blocs. But we must continue our efforts and investments to maintain our international profile and influence.

Here, I want to pay tribute to the dedication and the professionalism of the men and women of the Canadian Foreign Service. Highly praised abroad, often *mal aimé* at home, they go about their duties in the long-standing tradition of their profession.

There are budget cuts, redeployment of staff, redirection of scarce resources, but these professionals rise to these challenges as they do to others.

There is a great degree of creativity and imagination in the department, and every night the "lights burn bright" here at headquarters and at posts abroad, as foreign policy, like the economy, is now a 24-hour-a-day business.