

One of the great pleasures I feel as a Canadian is experiencing the beauty of changing seasons. For those of you who have ever experienced the harsh beauty of a Canadian winter, you will understand the joy and lightness that many Canadians feel at this time of year as the blanket of ice and snow disappears. Spring is always a time of emotional as well as natural renewal in our country.

I know that this is also the beginning of the Buddhist New Year, and much of that same sense of positive renewal and revitalization takes place in your country at this time.

These very human feelings of joy, relief, exhilaration, excitement and hope can be transformed into a positive force that can have major implications far beyond the individual. In fact, that positive force can affect the overall social, economic and political climate of a country, its governments and its institutions.

As the world has changed dramatically over the past few years, much interest and much emphasis has been placed on the emerging role of global and regional structures and networks, such as the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Some of this is emotional -- seeking islands of stability in a sea of swirling change. Much of it is merited, because with the collapse of Communism and the former Soviet Union, we see a need for interactive, interdependent organizations, even though their roles and rules are developing only a step ahead of the changes that they wish to harness and direct.

A very good example of this new international co-operation is the expanded concept of peacekeeping. Once simply the placement of neutral forces between two parties that had agreed to disengage, peacekeeping is now a far more complex process that tries to deal with the causes and after-effects of conflict, as well as with the conflict itself.

Once seen as the sole domain of the United Nations, regional organizations also are beginning to take up responsibilities for regional security. In my participation at successive meetings of the Post-Ministerial Conference of ASEAN, I have encouraged the inclusion of regional security issues on the agenda in their political as well as military dimensions. We noted with pleasure the recent decision of ASEAN members to embark in this new direction.

Much of the effort of modern peacekeeping is directed at the very human, very personal level, as current missions in Somalia, Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia so graphically demonstrate.

If the world has learned one lesson from the events of the past half decade, it is that security cannot be addressed in isolation