

decades is that we have escaped the devastating global wars that twice destroyed the world in the forty years before 1945.

But one does not save children, or reschedule debt or avoid world war by accident. That is the hardest of work, and requires, in addition to dedication, a continuing commitment to international systems and institutions.

That brings me directly to the Commonwealth, whose success is particularly important in an age where other international institutions are less successful, but which is also vulnerable to skepticism and complacency.

It is fair to say that the modern post-war Commonwealth came of age with the establishment of the Secretariat in 1965. It found its mandate then with the launching of its highly successful aid and development programs - and it found a new vocation in the active role it assumed in facilitating the process toward Zimbabwe's independence. In that case, and with the Gleneagles Agreement, the Commonwealth demonstrated a capacity to achieve significant political change. That capacity must be exercised with care, but it characterizes the Commonwealth as an agency of action not just talk.

So does the quieter progress made on other issues - the survival of small island nations; the pioneering studies on the world financial and trading system, and on indebtedness among developing countries; the nurturing of nearly 300 non-governmental Commonwealth organizations.

I am particularly pleased by the informal practice of having Commonwealth Ministers meet just before major U.N. conferences, to explore the possibility that this particular family might find agreement that could elude larger assemblies. Special Commonwealth consultation in UNESCO has helped bring both progress and perspective to the process of reform required in that organization. The meeting of Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs, just before the end-of-decade Conference in Nairobi, helped focus attention on the basic questions of access to technology and credit and ownership of land.

That practice takes advantage of the two characteristics which make the Commonwealth successful. The first characteristic of course is that we reach across oceans and languages and races and conditions of development. The second characteristic, as important, is precisely that we have developed the habit of working together, or looking beyond differences, instead of seeking refuge in them. To return to my own experience, the Conference at Lusaka was one