

We in Canada are well placed to participate in this kind of co-operation, since we are members of several key regional organizations, such as the CSCE, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and the Organization of American States (OAS). We also have excellent relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

All these organizations deal with similar subjects. They include, among others, democratization, respect for human rights, sound management of government, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Dialogue within these organizations can contribute significantly towards the building of confidence and the easing of tensions.

Although modest, the record is positive. For example, last summer, security in the Asia-Pacific region was, for the first time, on the agenda of the meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Manila. And in the OAS, the member countries will be looking for ways of enhancing security in the hemisphere, and will deal with subjects such as the proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons.

All this to say that as we near the turn of the century, the human condition, human rights, peace and security are no longer the exclusive domain of nation states -- they are now a concern of the international community as well. This philosophy is also increasingly evident in the actions of non-governmental organizations such as Doctors without Borders. This is one reason why the promotion of good government and of human rights is a priority of Canadian foreign policy.

We are not trying to impose our own political or legal system on others, but rather to promote universal values, as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations. Why? Because when such values are respected, it gives the people of any country peaceful options and peaceful remedies.

In short, it guarantees the force of law rather than the law of force. These values are especially important given the great changes now taking place in the international order and the centres of economic and political power. They must be our guiding principles as we navigate the troubled waters of this century's last few years.

In our time, there are more questions than answers in the book on foreign policy. For example: What price are we prepared to pay to ensure international peace and security in the world and to promote universal values?

In our efforts to promote good government and human rights, and to improve our environment, how will we reconcile universal values with national sovereignty?