

In acknowledging this broad context, we must continue to address priority concerns in the traditional security and arms control fields.

An extremely disturbing development of the last decade has been the accumulation by some states, in other regions, of enormous quantities of conventional arms, often coupled with efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

We witnessed this year, in the Persian Gulf, the unfortunate consequences for states around the world of the virtually unrestrained build-up of arms in one country.

Iraq's immense conventional armaments, its declared readiness to use chemical and biological weapons and uncertainties concerning its nuclear intentions highlighted the need for increased global attention to these issues.

It is this concern which led the Canadian government, over recent months, to address with increased attention the problems associated with proliferation. In February, Prime Minister Mulroney pointed to the need for a new political will, a new momentum on the part of the international community to deal urgently with these issues.

Canada believes that the Organization of American States is well placed to demonstrate leadership in promoting co-operation to enhance security.

In addressing these problems, member states will be continuing a strong hemispheric tradition, and will send an important signal to all regions of the world about our commitment to international peace and security in the post-Cold War era.

In this spirit, we are proposing that the General Assembly adopt this week a resolution on security condemning the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the world, as well as excessive build-ups of conventional arms, and establishing a working group to study this issue and report back to this Assembly with recommendations for action.

Mr. Chairman, fellow heads of delegations, the Gulf conflict has provided us with a unique opportunity to take action regarding the threat of arms proliferation. That conflict brought home to us all, each day, the global risks and costs of such uncontrolled accumulations of weapons. All citizens now expect us to take steps to ensure that such a situation does not -- and indeed cannot -- occur again. We must not disappoint this expectation. We must respond to this challenge using every opportunity to find solutions to these issues. And, we must act quickly, at this precious moment of opportunity.