Take Latin America, for example. With a couple of notable exceptions, the continent has taken enormous strides toward democracy. Around the table at the Organization of American States (OAS) and in places such as Haiti, the struggle for democracy is real -- and it will, sooner or later, succeed.

The same can be said for other parts of the world. There is a growing global consensus that democracy works -- politically, socially and economically. This is an important step forward. Canada must help to maintain that momentum.

Second, we are learning to use our international institutions more effectively, beginning with the United Nations.

This is the Canadian mantra of multilateralism.

The UN has been the focal point of Canadian diplomacy for many decades. For much of this time we were something of a voice in the wilderness -- preaching multilateralism while much of the world blustered about bilaterally.

However, when we look at the emerging security environment, a key and qualitatively new factor is the growing willingness of states to use multilateral institutions and, consequently, their enhanced effectiveness. This is perhaps the greatest single change in the global security environment. There have always been conflicts and insecurity; there has always been interdependence; but not until recently has there been a global willingness to act through multilateral institutions.

The United Nations

This opens up enormous possibilities for the international community to deal with its problems and resolve its conflicts through the United Nations and other multilateral organizations.

The UN remains the heart of the global political system and the focal point for conflict management. The Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace" points the way forward for the UN: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building.

It is an ambitious agenda, but one that reflects both the new challenges and the new opportunities.

The Secretary-General suggests, and we agree, that the international community needs to become more active and interventionist in both preventing and resolving conflict. He also points out the need to be realistic about the extent to which the UN system can support the growing number of demands being placed upon its conflict management resources.