

The key elements are all here --

- political establishments that cannot always be termed democratic, with the rule of law only tentatively in place;
- numerous actual or potential ethnic hostilities;
- unrestrained nationalism, rising xenophobia and racism;
- thousands of weapons -- conventional, nuclear, chemical -- often under less than rigorous control either in terms of storage and maintenance or in terms of sales and exports;
- decades of environmental abuse and neglect -- in places, almost total devastation of rivers, soil, forests and air;
- underpinning it all, economic frailty and underdevelopment, rising unemployment and growing economic disparities;
- leading to the potential prospect of uncontrollable mass migration of people to other parts of the continent or world in search of a better future --

in short, a spectrum of flashpoints looking for a spark.

#### Co-operative Security

None of the elements is in itself new. What is new is that any of the flashpoints can set off a chain reaction of effects that can implicate the entire world, within moments of their occurrence.

Social, economic, political and environmental links have become so complex and inclusive that no country can set itself outside the agenda of daily world events. A breakdown in one part of the matrix automatically engages countries outside the region in question and calls for a new form of co-operative security to protect basic ideals and individual interests.

#### Taking Action on the Co-operative Security Agenda

Facing such a difficult and volatile global co-operative security agenda, we are fortunate that there are some strong positive forces at work.

First, despite the chaos and instability, democracy is gaining ground globally. I have been to many corners of the world in the past 18 months, and I have seen for myself the progress of democratic traditions and the willingness of people to struggle for their rights where despots still linger.