

At the same time, trade barriers are coming down, and economies are being opened, to let in new ideas and enterprise. These are brave and difficult changes. It is one thing to attempt political transformation. It is quite another to accept the challenge of economic revolution at the same time, because the economic adjustments inevitably bring social tensions. We applaud the historic steps taken by Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico, Argentina and Venezuela among others.

That turn to the marketplace, that flowering of democracy are, in our view, examples of a new realism which now defines international life - a realism which discards ideologies which do not work and embraces practices which deliver tangible progress.

We saw this welcome moderation in the recent progress towards peace in Central America, where flexibility was replacing rigidity both in the region and outside.

The events of the last few days in El Salvador are a serious cause for concern and pose a definite threat to the consolidation of the peace process in Central America. We urge the parties to the conflict to put an end to this senseless shedding of blood and to return to the negotiation table. The long history of the conflict in El Salvador has amply demonstrated that violence cannot and will not bring a solution: only negotiations can. Similarly, we hope the negotiations taking place at this very moment, here in Washington, between the Nicaraguan government and leaders of the Contras will lead to an agreement permitting the re-instatement of the ceasefire.

We also see a new pragmatism in discussions concerning debt, where both lenders and borrowers recognize the need for compromise and imagination.

Interdependence is being accepted as a fact of life and a guide to action. It is no longer possible for nations or institutions to operate in isolation.

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But that interdependence displays itself not simply in those positive trends we see in the region, but also in the problems we face.

Indeed there is a connection between the two. For without pressing challenges to our survival as societies - indeed as a species - there would be no compelling case for common action and constructive dialogue.