
STRENGTHENING MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

Over the last five decades, the international community has constructed a broad network of institutions to foster co-operation. While the Cold War largely prevented the close collaboration envisioned in the United Nations charter, the end of that era has seen new opportunities opening up.

Many of the institutions developed at the height of ideological conflict during the Cold War are no longer adequate to meet current challenges. Canada, which has been an ardent supporter of multilateral co-operation, believes it is time to consider reforming many of these international institutions, particularly the United Nations and its related agencies.

The economic summit provides an opportunity to look at the effectiveness of international co-operation and existing institutions. It is also an opportunity to review priorities and propose reform. In Canada's view, what is needed is not new organizations for international co-operation but more effective performance by existing institutions.

There are many problems associated with the present international consultative and decision-making arrangements. Growing interdependence and the weight of new issues have triggered many of these problems, especially those related to mandate, resources and management. The UN secretary general is pursuing fundamental reforms in the United Nations system, but new tasks, especially in the field of peacekeeping, are outstripping both the capacity of the UN to respond and the willingness of member states to pay assessed contributions.

In his *Agenda for Peace* the secretary general provided a range of options that allow the UN to

work more effectively to improve the international security atmosphere. Specifically, he outlined a set of proposals to improve the UN's ability to cope with a growing list of peacekeeping demands. These include several possible ways to investigate and resolve disputes before they become full-fledged conflicts, and military action from preventive deployment to enforcement. Other proposals are focused on the post-conflict period: tribunals for war crimes, repatriation of refugees, humanitarian relief operations, election monitoring, civil administration and economic reconstruction. Some of these elements are already in play in Bosnia, Cambodia and Somalia. Canada supports the thrust of the UN secretary general's proposals.

Problems of mandate, administration and leadership continue to hamper effective international co-operation. In the UN system, co-ordination among competing agencies tends to be weak. Without clear priorities, these agencies cannot effectively address core policy issues or provide adequate levels of funding. As the number of new international organizations has increased, many of them regional, struggles over mandates have led to duplication of effort rather than effective co-operation.

As a middle power deeply involved in promoting peace and security, Canada believes it is essential that G-7 countries commit themselves to revitalizing existing multilateral institutions for political and economic co-operation. One way they can do this is by supporting the proposals of the UN secretary general in his *Agenda for Peace*.