THE WORLD AFTER THE COLD WAR : COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

Address by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, to the 90th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Canberra, 16 September 1993

As we look out upon the world of the 1990s, it is clearly a rather less safe and less happy place than we had all hoped it would be with the end of the Cold War - and the end of the East-West ideological confrontation (so familiar in so many IPU Conferences over the years) on which the Cold War was based. The threat of world devastation posed by the nuclear arms race between the superpowers has been dramatically reduced, raising hopes for the emergence of a new, peaceful international order. With the end of the Cold War, there is certainly now far more scope than before for cooperation in the prevention and resolution of conflict. But the irony is that there are now many more disputes, conflicts and crises coming out for such attention.

Part of the problem has been simply the removal of the Cold War gridlock - the discipline imposed by the Cold War superpowers on each other and their respective supporters. There is now more room for states to manoeuvre: some are beginning to do so, and some are bound to seek to do so in the future. Some of the emerging economic powers have yet to acquire political or military profiles commensurate with their new wealth, and the process of adjustment certainly has ample potential to generate regional tensions. Should those tensions escalate into conflict, the unhappy reality is that proliferation of more sophisticated conventional weapons, and proliferation of the capacity to develop weapons of mass destruction, makes any prospect of major regional conflict an alarming one for the world as a whole.

The release of Cold War pressures has been associated with another major new development of security concern with which we are all now disturbingly familiar - the resurgence of ethno-nationalism, often taking a violent form. Some ethnic groups are being prepared to pursue their claims for self-determination within the framework of existing states - treating them essentially as claims for minority human rights protection - but many others

have made clear that they will be satisfied by nothing less than their nations becoming states, causing the fragmentation of existing states in the process. And again, the proliferating availability of weaponry of every degree of sophistication has given a sharp new edge to these concerns.

The global economic and social environment is not very much happier. The developed Western economies have been limping: with low growth rates, historically high unemployment rates, and a continuing inability to date to reach agreement - between themselves, and with the rest of the world's trading nations - about the GATT trade liberalisation measures so necessary to give a new kick-start to world trade.

Elsewhere, rates of economic growth have been extraordinarily uneven: some regions, in particular East Asia, have experienced spectacular advance, but in others deprivation has become even more endemic - and even more deeply felt in light of the comparison. Some states have simply been unable to cope with exploding internal economic, political and social problems, and for all practical purposes have collapsed, leaving the international community to respond somehow to the humanitarian crises that have so often followed.

Communications technology, which has done so much to bring the world together, has also been very selective in its impact: sometimes, as we all know, issues are placed on the international agenda not because of their intrinsic importance, but because of their accessibility to television coverage. It is proving as hard as it ever was to mobilise governments, individually or collectively, to address issues which have huge long term implications for security and prosperity, but which may lack immediate impact - for example population pressures and environmental degradation.

Looking out upon a world with all these characteristics, it is easy to be pessimistic and fatalistic. But I don't think we should be. For everything that has gone wrong over the last few years, there is something else that has gone right. To match against the awful continuing tragedy in the former Yugoslavia, we have, for example, this week's peace agreement in the Middle East - of course only the first step in what remains a long journey, but an enormously encouraging one notwithstanding. And to match against the continuing chaos and uncertainty in Somalia, and the at best very limited

success of the UN operation there, we have now the unquestioned success of the UN operation in Cambodia - and the end at last of more than twenty years of what has been a real 20th century tragedy involving bloody war, civil war, genocide, invasion and civil war again.

A terrible conflict continues in Angola, but peace is at hand at last in Mozambique - and the final death of apartheid is imminent in South Africa. Military regimes have given way to democratic ones throughout Latin America. Many problems remain to be solved in the former Soviet Union, but governments that can credibly claim to reflect the will of their peoples are in place throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The military regime in Burma continues to resist the obvious mood of its people for liberty and democracy, but elsewhere in the region monolithic government structures are beginning - driven as much as anything by economic imperatives - to show signs of flexibility and responsiveness.

Again, we continue to worry about weapons proliferation, but a Chemical Weapons Convention has at last been signed - after twenty years of negotiation; North Korea remains in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; major achievements have been made in nuclear arms reduction; and for the first time in the history of the nuclear age a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty now seems within reach.

More than any of these individual developments - and there are of course many others that we could discuss, on both the positive and negative sides of the ledger - it seems to me that there are some encouraging larger trends at work in the world that should give us more hope than we have been entitled to in the past that fundamental problems really are capable of resolution.

The three trends that I have in mind can be labelled - a little simplistically, but nonetheless perhaps helpfully - as 'convergence', 'community' and 'cooperation'. Each of these is apparent in the world as a whole - but they are also particularly evident in our own Asia Pacific region. And one of the points I want to emphasise today is that things are happening in this part of the world which may be seen perhaps as a model, or a microcosm, of what is possible elsewhere.

By the 'Asia Pacific' region I am referring to all the countries of East Asia, of Oceania, of North America, and (on some accounts, at least) the Pacific Coast of Latin America as well: this is a huge slice of the world, embracing over 2 billion people, over 40 percent of the world's trade, 50 percent now of its production, and a hugely diverse set of cultures, political ideologies, economic systems and governing institutions. My basic theme is that if we in the Asia Pacific can get our act together when it comes to working together for the resolution of common problems, then almost anything is possible!

When I refer to the trend, or phenomenon, of "convergence", I am referring essentially to the number of significant ways in which things are being <u>done</u> more alike, and the way in which institutions, practices and outlooks are more <u>becoming</u> alike, across national borders: as a result of which countries, cultures and peoples - still different and individual though they may be - are becoming much less exotic to each other than has been the case in the past.

One obvious dimension of the convergence I mentioned has been *economic*. Not only is business practice becoming rapidly more uniform, but business itself has become ever more indifferent to national borders. World trade is now $3500 billion annually and growing at around 7 per cent; world foreign direct investment, although starting from a much lower base, is increasing at four times that rate; daily transactions on foreign exchange markets now exceed $600 billion; and technological change, particularly in communications, continues to supply rocket fuel to the whole process. National governments can and do seek, with varying degrees of success, to stimulate this activity, hold it back of manage it - but increasingly, under the relentless pressure of global market forces, their direct influence on business activity is becoming less and less.

A second dimension of convergence has been *political*. In all the innumerable areas where they do retain influence, governments are increasingly being judged the same way - not by their claims to ideological rectitude, but by their performance. Are they promoting or inhibiting economic development? Are they ensuring a fair distribution of the benefits of economic growth and protecting the weak? Are they improving the quality of life for ordinary people and protecting the environment for their children? Are they conducting their nations' foreign relations in ways that reinforce or undermine their

security and pride? Is government being run in the interests of the governors or the governed?

The urge for genuine democracy, for responsiveness in government on all these fronts, should never be underestimated. It is one that cuts across traditional cultural boundaries. It is difficult to believe that the democratic instinct shown last May by the people of Cambodia, against formidable odds, does not exist equally - and would not be as vigorously exercised if given half a chance - in other nations in the region, and outside it, where democracy is yet to be fully realised. And recent developments in Japan are an instructive illustration of another aspect of how long-established political moulds are being broken.

The third dimension of convergence is *social* and *cultural*. Economic development and the globalisation of business have generated - more conspicuously in this region than anywhere else - a rapidly growing middle class sharing, irrespective of national borders, common aspirations for a better domestic life style, international travel, and significantly enhanced educational opportunities for their children. I don't want to suggest for a moment that there are no longer gross disparities of wealth and income in the countries of this region or anywhere else: of course there are, and the achievement of minimum acceptable standards of living for everyone, and a better balanced distribution of wealth and income in societies, remains a crucial objective for all of us everywhere committed to good governance. I am simply making the point that the dramatic "middle class-ification" of so many countries is an important development in breaking down barriers between nations, and creating the conditions for better understanding, better cooperation and ever greater interdependence.

The phenomenon of convergence makes the concept of "community" much easier to grasp. Nations that increasingly see and do things the same way - economically, politically, socially - are nations that should find it easier to talk together, to build processes and institutions together, and advance common interests or resolve common problems. I believe that the gradual emergence of a sense of community in our own region - albeit a very recent phenomenon, with some distance yet to go - is a striking and exciting development.

There are two good examples of how this new sense of community is working itself out in practice in the Asia Pacific region. The first is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process, established on Australia's initiative in 1989. APEC is now accepted both within the region and around the world as the Asia Pacific region's pre-eminent economic forum: it not only embraces the 15 major economies of the region, but builds a very firm institutional bridge across the Pacific in a way that operates as a very useful counterweight to some of the dangerous pressures for division between North America and East Asia, particularly between the United States and Japan.

APEC started out very cautiously as a kind of regional OECD, focusing initially on data compilation and exchanges of policy views; it then began to work on a series of programs for economic cooperation in particular sectors like minerals and energy, and human resources development. As it has become more firmly established,

APEC's emphasis is now on working rapidly towards the achievement of major trade <u>facilitation</u>, with the focus on very practical issues like common technical standards, mutual recognition of qualifications, customs harmonisation, removal of non-tariff barriers to trade, and achievement of significant commonality in investment rules, all within the framework of intellectual commitment to 'open regionalism'. What 'open regionalism' means is that we are all committed to regional economic cooperation, trade facilitation and ultimately further trade liberalisation - but in the context of a larger commitment to a free and open <u>global</u> trade and investment environment.

It is not only on the economic but the <u>security</u> side that the Asia Pacific has been developing a new sense of community, with the recent establishment of a major new forum for regional security dialogue. I think it is fair to say Australia has also played a useful bridge-building role in encouraging this process to come together. I should perhaps acknowledge, though, that a few years ago, when I first floated the possibility of the evolution in the Asia Pacific region of a new regional architecture - modelled very loosely on the emerging CSCE in Europe - to respond to new security realities of the post-Cold War world, I met with a less than enthusiastic response from my US counterpart Jim Baker: why did we need any new multilateral approaches

when our old bilateral alliance structures had served us so well for so long? But times have changed, in Washington and everywhere else. What seemed very radical propositions just three or four years ago have now become almost the regional orthodoxy.

The most important development has undoubtedly been the creation of the new ASEAN Regional Forum on security issues in Singapore two months ago - a forum that brings together not only the members of ASEAN and their traditional regional dialogue partners (US and Canada, Japan and Korea, Australia and New Zealand) but also other crucial regional security players like Russia, China, and Vietnam. We are now in the process of identifying an agenda of specific issues on which that Forum might focus, with the most likely candidates at this stage being weapons non-proliferation, transparency and trust building strategies, and the development of new approaches to preventive diplomacy.

The examples I have just given of ways in which a real sense of community is now emerging in the Asia Pacific region are also of course examples of a much broader phenomenon of cooperation which we are now seeing in so many ways in international affairs.

Day by day we are seeing countries finding new ways of working together bilaterally, regionally and globally - and on an ever-widening agenda of issues. A new label - 'transnational issues' -has had to be found to describe a whole set of issues which are not of a traditional political and security, or economic and trade, character but in relation to which countries have come to realise that unilateral strategies are inadequate, and that they can only find solutions by working cooperatively with others: I am referring to such issues as climate change and other cross-border environmental issues, unregulated population flows, narcotics, terrorism and health problems like AIDS.

We are seeing countries find common ground at conferences like that on Environment and Development in Rio last year, and the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna this year, where some very crucial bridges were built between the developed nations (with their traditional pre-occupation with political and civil rights) and the developing countries (with their traditional emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights) - both sides recognising

now that <u>all</u> categories of human rights are universal and indivisible.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we are now seeing at the United Nations a continuing pattern of cooperation where it matters most of all, in the Security Council. In the first 45 years of its existence, between 1946 and 1990, the Security Council passed 646 resolutions - but saw vetos cast on 201 occasions, involving 241 actual negative votes. That lack of unanimity and political will among the permanent members during the Cold War era of course prevented the effective utilisation of the collective security system envisaged in the Charter, and seriously damaged the UN's general international standing. Since 1990 a total of 218 resolutions have been passed, covering an extraordinary array of issues of immense importance: in that time there has been only one veto cast, and that was effectively reversed a short time afterwards. Nobody suggests that the UN has it absoutely right, either in terms of all the decisions it has made, or its organisational capacity to implement them - there certainly does remain a gap between the expectations now held of the organisation and its capacity to deliver. But nobody can be in any doubt at all that we have, for the first time in its history, a United Nations working seriously, systematically and above all <u>cooperatively</u>, to wrestle with some of the great problems of our time.

The picture I have been painting is of a world with many continuing problems, by no means all of them solved by the end of the Cold War, but where there is very real cause to be optimistic about the future, and our capacity as an international community to resolve issues as they arise.

There will always be those, of course, who are deeply troubled by optimism in any form. One such, who has been making quite a stir in foreign policy circles around the world recently, is the American scholar Samuel Huntington, who recently published a major article entitled "The Clash of Civilisations?", the basic message of which is that if you thought East West ideological conflict was bad enough, you haven't seen anything yet! Huntington postulates that, in the aftermath of the Cold War, world politics is entering a new phase in which the great divisions, and the dominating sources of conflict, will be cultural - with potentially bloody fault-lines developing along the boudaries between the major civilisations, identified as Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and (possibly) African.

Australia comes in for special attention in Huntington's thesis: unlike most of the rest of the world, we get a whole footnote paragraph to ourselves! This follows a passage referring to "torn" countries like Turkey, Mexico and Russia, where, Huntington says, history, culture and traditions are non-Western, but the leaders badly want to make them Western. Australia demands attention because our recent very striking policy efforts to engage with our own region - to let our future be defined more by our Asian geography than our European history - make us a peculiarity, a 'torn country in reverse':

> Although it has been a full member not only of the West but also of the ... military and intelligence core of the West, its current leadership are in effect proposing that it defect from the West, re-define itself as an Asian country and cultivate close ties with its neighbours. Australia's future, they argue, is with the dynamic economies of East Asia. But, as I have suggested, close economic cooperation normally requires a common cultural base.

It seems to me that Huntington's thesis is quite fundamentally flawed, not only so far as my country is concerned, but much more generally. While it is, of course, the case that what he describes as 'civilisations' are very important in defining what are still very important differences between peoples around the world, the question is how <u>relevant</u> those differences are, and the extent to which they - and they alone - will generate conflicts and divisions that would not otherwise be crucial.

Common Islamic roots did not stop Iraq invading Kuwait, nor most of its Arab neighbours joining with the Western retaliation; common Confucian roots haven't stopped acute tensions between North and South Korea; common 'Africanism' hasn't stopped endless conflicts in that continent; and common Western heritage hasn't stopped not only bloody conflicts like that in Northern Ireland, but serious trade disputes between Europe, the United States and countries like Australia.

The notion that a country like Australia is inevitably destined, because of its history and culture, to remain an outsider in its own region seems to me to be at odds with all recent experience. It is at odds with economic and political

developments as they are evolving in the region, with attitudes as they are evolving both within Australia and the region at large - and with that whole spirit, and reality, of convergence, community and cooperation that I have tried to describe.

It is a matter of more than merely passing academic interest who is right in all of this - and I think it should be of more than passing interest to the IPU, which is of course dedicated to finding common ground, and cooperative solutions, to common problems between peoples from vastly different cultural traditions. What happens with Australia's effort to come to terms with our region may prove to be significant not just for Australia and those with whom we are now interacting so constructively: maybe we do have here something of a test case, one of not merely regional but potentially much wider global significance.

Maybe if Australia gets right its relationship with Asia - as I think we are getting it right - we will have made a point that will reverberate around the rest of the world as we move into the 21st century: that it is genuinely possible for countries of vastly different background to work together and live together cooperatively and constructively, not only for our mutual profit and security, but for the pleasure of each other's company.

* * * *