



*Address by the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the National Forum on*

from what Canadians think is possible and desirable. The Forum provides an effective, direct conduit for Canadians to give their views and participate in developing foreign policy options.

If there is one conclusion that I have drawn from our consultations to date, including the meetings of the Forum, it is that Canadians remain committed to an active, internationalist foreign policy. The issues and the setting may have changed, but Canadian support for an activist, middle-power approach is as strong as it was 40 years ago, when we launched the first peacekeeping force.

Where Canada Made a Difference in 1996

With this public support, we have pursued key Canadian goals over the past year. In areas that matter to Canadians, we have exercised leadership, and we have made a difference internationally.

The leadership exercised by the Prime Minister galvanized the international community into forming the multinational force for Zaire. This in turn provided the political impetus needed to unblock a stalemate that threatened the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees. As a result, the need for immediate humanitarian assistance has receded somewhat. But we are continuing our efforts to deal with longer-term needs, to break the cycle of violence that has racked the Great Lakes region of Africa.

The Government has also taken a leadership role when it comes to protecting Canadian interests internationally. In response to the Helms-Burton Act, Canada led international efforts to resist this exercise of unacceptable extraterritorial jurisdiction. The European Union, Japan, Mexico, Caribbean and Central American countries, and the Rio Group have all joined us in criticizing this

legislation. Here at home, we have proposed amendments to legislation to help Canadian companies defend themselves in the face of Helms-Burton and similar unacceptable laws.

As part of our commitment to put children's rights at the top of the domestic and foreign policy agenda, the Government appointed Senator Landon Pearson as a special advisor in 1996. Under Senator Pearson's lead, we have held broad-based consultations on children's rights. We have started working internationally on measures against child labour and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. And, under Bill C-27, we have proposed amendments to the Criminal Code that allow for the prosecution of Canadians who engage in so-called "sex tourism."

Canada was at the forefront of the movement to ban anti-personnel mines. These weapons keep on fighting battles that ended months, years and even decades ago. They kill or injure roughly 500 people per week, 90 per cent of them civilians, many of them children. At a conference in Ottawa this October, I invited the governments represented to give their support to the signature at the end of 1997 of a treaty banning all anti-personnel mines.

In Bosnia, Canada provided support to free media and democratic elections, in order to rebuild civil society and consolidate the peace. At the same time, we continue to contribute to the international peacekeeping force. In fact, Winnipeg's own Princess Patricia's Regiment will be leaving soon for Bosnia, to take over as the Canadian contingent within the stabilization force agreed on by NATO this week.

Canada has led efforts to pursue war criminals from the former Yugoslavia and from Rwanda, in the belief that there can be no lasting peace without justice. A Canadian, Mme Justice Louise Arbour, was appointed Chief Prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunals in The Hague