

## Summary notes from Nigeria sanctions roundtable, Ottawa, 11 June 1998

This paper briefly summarizes the objectives, conclusions, and recommendations of the expert roundtable on Nigeria and sanctions, held in Ottawa on 11 June, 1998. The main themes arising from the discussions are divided into four categories: broad themes pertaining to sanctions strategy, possible routes of influence, obstacles to change, and "pros and cons" of various strategies.

### Objectives of the meeting

The purpose of the roundtable was to identify options that might realistically be pursued should the situation in Nigeria not improve. Four sets of questions guided the discussion:

- When are sanctions effective? How would Nigeria respond to sanctions?
- What international forum or multilateral coalition would best be able to influence the behaviour of the Nigerian military regime? How might such a coalition be constructed?
- What are the legal requirements to impose sanctions on Nigeria? How might these impact on Canadian policy?
- What other measures might represent useful complements or alternatives to sanctions?

### Broad strategic themes

- The situation in Nigeria carries broad implications for Canadian interests, and for regional and global peace, stability, and prosperity. The cost of doing nothing is likely to be very high.
- The direct coercive effect of unilateral Canadian sanctions would be negligible. Nonetheless, such measures would firmly position Canada as a leader in the drive for democracy in Nigeria. This, in turn, could provide a significant political boost to the Nigerian opposition, and to progressive elements of global civil society.
- Taken in isolation, sanctions are unlikely to prove very effective in prompting the Nigerian leadership to modify its policies. A balanced, "carrot and stick" approach is indicated. Rewards for positive change are likely to be particularly useful.
- It is important to present the regime with specific, quantifiable requests (such as the release of political prisoners), even while pursuing the general objective of a wholesale "transition to democracy." Each request should carry clearly specified incentives, both positive and negative.
- A multilateral approach, involving states *and* civil-societal actors, is of paramount importance.
- If they are used at all, economic sanctions should be designed to cause pain to members of the Nigerian regime, and to minimize the negative impact on Nigerian civilians and neighbouring states.