SESSION I: DETERMINING PRIORITIES AND TIMELINES FOR INTERVENTION

A) Perspectives From the Field

An important theme which must inform peace-building is the *faith* that the donor community must have in the peoples of war-torn societies. This translates into the need for policies to shift from a focus on the state to greater support for community-based peace-building. This is the level at which the "silent majority" must be encouraged to build their local capacities for long-term peace. While this reorientation is needed, and will involve greater cooperation with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), this does not preclude the continuing roles of the state, the donor community, and the rest of civil society. Donor policies should perhaps look to implementing *peace-building criteria* or even conditionalities that support local communities. Examples of this, in support of the *decentralised*, human security focus of peace-building, could involve: environmental sustainability, political participation, and equitable distribution. This implies a shift towards the "sharing" of sovereignty between the state and the people, between the central government and the regions.

The Rwandan conflict provides a case in which the response of the international community was wholly unsatisfactory. Assistance did not come in a *rapid* and *early* manner, which was essential. Aid promised was dispersed very slowly and was spent largely on refugee camps, where Hutu extremists are very active. More aid should have been focused on building local capacities for peace within Rwanda itself, and to assist the RPF government in establishing *internal stability*. There is also the problem of external NGOs not cooperating with the government, and that attitude must be changed. NGOs have an obligation to work with local authorities to evolve responsible and effective government initiatives. Rwanda also reveals the priority of implementing *justice* in cases of war crimes; people expect this as a prerequisite for reconciliation.

Discussion of other cases such as El Salvador and Bosnia focused on the priorities of *political stability* and *social order*, which must be seen as pillars supporting a true peace. If people continue to feel threatened and insecure at the local, community level, this will undermine their faith in the "peace" proclaimed by authorities. Crime and banditry often play a large role in this problem of post-war instability. This too points to the need for new political structures to be based on the firm foundation of a *reconstituted civil society* engaged in *active participation in governance*. Inter-ethnic tolerance and respect for pluralism are important here, as is the need for a strong judiciary that will pursue cases of human rights violations and abuse of power.