

SUMMARY

Issues relating to security in Africa have taken on singular importance in recent years. As a result, Canada has decided to take certain initiatives, among them organizing meetings and discussion forums under the aegis of La Francophonie. These meetings will consist of round-table discussions attended by small groups of national experts, who will discuss common concerns. The discussions held at the Université du Québec à Montréal on March 22, 1996, on the topic "De l'analyse des origines à la proposition de pistes de solutions" (From Analyzing Origins to Proposing Solutions), focussed on identifying topics for these discussion groups.

While recognizing the importance of addressing the concerns and requirements of the people who must make decisions in the short term, and without neglecting the significance of such decisions, the approach adopted at this meeting entailed a more comprehensive analysis of economic and political processes. The purpose of this approach was to identify the major constraints which are liable to spark or exacerbate conflicts, create political destabilization, and indeed doom to failure short-range strategies which were considered promising not so long ago.

It would appear that Canada definitely has a specific role to play within La Francophonie, both in supporting short-term interventions, which are seen as unavoidable for purposes of conflict resolution, and also in long-term interventions, which are seen rather as a requirement for conflict prevention. Analysis of conflict prevention from a broader economic and socio-political perspective leads to the conclusion that economics cannot be dissociated from socio-political considerations. It also highlights the need to formulate both long- and short-term responses, and above all, the need for Africans to reclaim ownership of the discourse, the analysis and the responses. Canada is particularly well placed within La Francophonie to argue for the importance of this process and to support it by creating instruments such as discussion forums, as it plans to do.

The main subjects discussed related to the following general areas: debt; reform or restructuring of the State, and in particular, its role in redistributing wealth; social and economic rights and the role of civil society (women's groups, unions and national NGOs); legal recognition of and protection for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities; military spending reduction and demilitarization within the framework of a *co-operative security* approach with the OAU.