



Peacebuilding After the Guatemala Accords

The "Canada-Guatemala Roundtable" assessed peacebuilding priorities and opportunities for Canadian government and NGOs to consider in their efforts to build peace in Guatemala after the Peace Accords. Recommendations were made for Canadian official and NGO contributions to strengthening peace and civil society in Guatemala as well as a number of suggestions on Indigenous Peoples, resettlement, demilitarizing the state, and human rights monitoring. Key recommendations to the Canadian government include:

- mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the Guatemalan government abides by the Accords. Canada can use diplomatic and other channels to encourage the Guatemalan government to fulfil its obligations, including "peace conditionality" on aid, political or other assistance,
- Canada should support the UN operation in Guatemala while insisting that UN actors have a transparent coordination structure and regular public reporting,
- the Canadian government should support the development of linkages between domestic NGOs in Canada and their counterparts in Guatemala,
- through its aid program for Guatemala, Canada should invest resources to support peasants to make the most productive use of available land, particularly in the context of the economic reintegration of the displaced, returnee and demobilized populations.

Canada and Follow-up to the World Food Summit

In March 1997 a roundtable was held in Saskatoon to discuss follow-up to the World Food Summit and the two key mechanisms arising from it to ensure the right to food: the International Food Security Convention and an International Code of Conduct on the Right to Adequate Food. Participants included NGOs representing farmers, church and aid communities, academics and government officials. Some highlights follow.

Given that the Code of Conduct is further advanced, it was identified as having greater potential and a more immediate role to play in advancing Canada's position that food is a fundamental human right. Participants urged the Government to:

- actively participate in the development, refinement and implementation of the Code of Conduct within Canada,
- actively engage in the further development of the Code and promote the adoption and implementation of the Code of Conduct at an international level with a view to defining actions to advance the right to food and thereby reduce hunger at home and abroad,
- host a meeting, one year after the World Food Summit, to review progress on the Summit commitments and the status of the Code of Conduct.

Participants concluded that Canada has an important role to play in ensuring that the right to food becomes a respected, enforceable right for all people.

Defending and Promoting Free Expression Around the World

In March 1997, the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists prepared an issues identification paper outlining areas for Canadian action to promote free expression around the world. The paper argues that freedom of expression is central to Canadian values of democracy, good governance, human rights and development, and that Canada brings a unique set of skills to international work on freedom of expression. Some key areas for further action include:

- protecting freedom of expression on the Internet: Canada should take a leadership role in opposing restrictions on the Internet,
- legislation and free expression: Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a sound starting point for helping other countries develop approaches to balancing free expression and permissible grounds of restriction,