

Peacebuilding has emerged as one of the critical features of international involvement in conflict and post-conflict situations. It has also become a prominent focus of Canadian foreign policy and the human security agenda that has been promoted by the current Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy. Peacebuilding has been attempted in a number of different settings with varying degrees of success. It also involves a number of very diverse instruments and, much like an orchestra, these diverse instruments must be finely tuned and working in concert in order to produce anything resembling a coherent approach to post-conflict reconciliation and long-term peace. In an effort to critically examine these diverse instruments and to assess the potential and pitfalls of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation, a one-day symposium was held at the University of Alberta on March 10, 2000. The symposium coincided with the visit of the Honourable Madam Justice Louise Arbour who delivered the University of Alberta's Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights in Edmonton on Thursday March 9, 2000. Madam Arbour's visit and her participation in the symposium provided a focal point for examining the different instruments that have been used in the peacebuilding process – ranging from the work of international criminal tribunals through to truth commissions to the work of nongovernmental organizations at the level of civil society. The symposium brought together academics, policy advisors, practitioners and an audience of more than 100 drawn from the Edmonton community to examine and discuss various dimensions of peacebuilding and the post-conflict reconciliation process. The symposium was sponsored by the generous support and assistance of the Human Rights Education Foundation, the University of Alberta, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development and the Security and Defence Forum of the Department of National Defence.