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## **SESSION V: TOWARDS CANADA'S ROLE IN RECONSTRUCTION**

The complexities of responding to societies devastated by internal war are daunting. The destruction of development and human capital in these conflicts results in a profound crisis of governance and political legitimacy. One way of thinking about this problem is to imagine internal war as a bonfire - the "kindling" is all of the development concerns such as scarce resources, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, and so on; the "gasoline" is the tensions which exist between different communal groups in society; and the "match" is irresponsible political action by elites. In the aftermath of war, all of these factors must be prevented from recombining.

Yet donor agencies tend to work only on the development "kindling" because it is relatively easy and value-neutral. But such conflicts require a response which is focused more on the "gasoline": reducing inter-group tensions in society by building capacities for free media, protection of human rights, an inclusive political process, and the maintenance of law and order. Canadian foreign policy now puts a priority focus on the provision of basic human needs, including the need for security, and the policy aim is to make such interventions sustainable over the long term. Policy-makers are in need of studies of societies which have managed to build a sustainable peace without substantial external assistance. There is perhaps much to learn from these local initiatives taken in countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Lebanon, Eritrea, and Namibia.

The setting of priorities also continues to be a dilemma for Canadian action to support peace-building. One notable area of concern is how to balance such reconstruction assistance with the promotion of human rights. Many of these post-conflict countries have serious human rights problems, and support for rebuilding state institutions that may be guilty of such violations (such as the security forces) can appear contradictory. One answer is give aid to support the government but also help to establish a local human rights monitoring capability, as has been done in Bosnia and Rwanda. Military expenditures are another area of concern when seeking to strike a balance in policy support for such reconstruction activities. But the overarching concern in engaging with this emerging global issue of post-war peace-building is to restore popular confidence at the local, community level in the political system. This must be done with policies that are comprehensive and holistic in scope, that approach support for internal peace and stability as a continuum from prevention to post-war reconstruction.

It was noted by some participants that in an era of declining resources for foreign aid, donor agencies have to be smarter about the allocation of what remains. This means a greater awareness of available Canadian expertise, and more communication and cooperation between government and NGOs. One approach would be to explore such