

Minister Axworthy

Lloyd Axworthy talks to **Canada World View**

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Civilian conflict is not new, but the increase in conflicts in the past decade makes rethinking our traditional approach imperative. And problems such as environmental deterioration, drug trafficking and international terrorism are new or growing, and affect us here in our own country. Canadians also travel a lot more than they used to, whether for business or tourism or study, and so our exposure to these problems is much greater than it used to be.

Add the fact that technology brings the graphic details of all this into our living rooms and you can see how, in an interconnected world, sooner or later the insecurity of others becomes our concern—and sometimes the cause of our insecurity. A human security approach is therefore not only desirable but increasingly indispensable. For Canadians, human security means a safer, less expensive and more receptive world. Our own security and prosperity require global stability.

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For our readers, can you define what is at the heart of the concept of human security?

Minister Axworthy

It is, in essence, an effort to construct a global society where the safety of the individual is at the centre of international priorities and a motivating force for international action; where international humanitarian standards and the rule of law are advanced and woven into a coherent web protecting the individual; where those who violate these standards are held fully accountable; and where our global, regional and bilateral institutions—present and future—are built and equipped to enhance and enforce these standards.

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When you talk about enforcing humanitarian standards and holding those who violate them fully accountable, aren't you

advocating a policy of intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state?

Minister Axworthy

No, human security does not create a "right to intervene." However, it does support the rights of populations affected by gross physical attack, coercive threats and intimidation. In the face of state-sponsored murder, appalling violations of human rights and the calculated brutalization of people, the humanitarian imperative to act cannot be ignored. In this situation, when other means of addressing the threats have been exhausted, robust measures (including military action) may be needed to defend human security. It is in this context that NATO's response to the conflict in Kosovo should be understood.

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This raises the issue of who determines when, where and how to intervene in a sovereign state. NATO was chastised in many quarters for its action in Kosovo. Many observers said that the decision about whether to intervene should have been left to the United Nations Security Council. What's your answer to these critics?

Minister Axworthy

NATO's decision to act was not taken lightly. But the evidence of atrocities was undeniable. The problem with the Security Council is that it has not been as relevant as we need it to be in the very changed and very dangerous world in which we live. We need to consider how it must adapt to the new realities in order to protect people better. That is why Canada introduced the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict at the Council in February. We requested that Secretary-General Annan study the issue and make concrete recommendations about what the role of the Council should be to better promote the security of

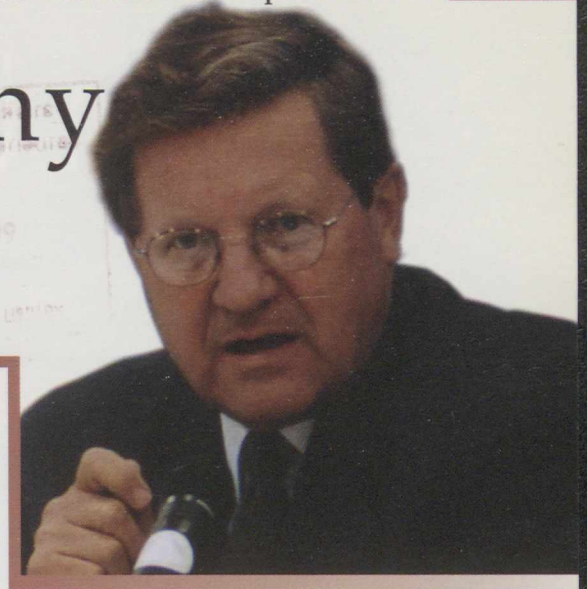


photo: DFAIT

people. We will be discussing his proposals this coming fall.

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Finally, you said that human security is a collective effort. Were you referring solely to states and international institutions or to a broader involvement?

Minister Axworthy

To better advance human security, we need to develop innovative global partnerships linking governments, non-governmental organizations, churches, human rights agencies, the private sector and educational groups. This is what we did with Norway when we signed the Lysøen Declaration in May 1998, which established our partnership for action—and when together we initiated the Human Security Network, which involves 11 countries and 9 prominent NGOs and international organizations. Such coalitions between government and civil society helped make the campaign to ban anti-personnel mines a success and were instrumental to progress in adopting the statute of the International Criminal Court. They are harbingers of the future, demonstrating the power of good ideas and pooled resources.

In the end, we all have a stake in ensuring better security for all human beings in this world. ●