

the position of Portugal and Australia towards the recent developments and suggested that the Portuguese government would most likely not support the autonomy option unless the East Timorese have a decisive say in determining their own destiny. Meanwhile, the Australian government tends to favor autonomy based on past political and diplomatic contexts. The Ambassador also discussed the important role of the Church -- the most trusted institution in East Timor and the rising fears of civil war within society due to wide-spread uncertainty. In conclusion of his presentation, he put forth the following principles Canada should take into consideration: 1) support for negotiations at the UN, 2) immediate cease-fire, 3) de-militarisation, and 4) continued funding. While he expressed optimism about the success of political solutions, the Ambassador was concerned about changing the ascending "culture of violence" within the East Timorese society.

II. IMMEDIATE PLAN FOR ACTION

The round-table participants forged a consensus on the *immediate* necessity of an outside presence in East Timor to stem possible civil war and enhance security of the East Timorese. A two months window for action was identified. In addition it was agreed that Canada should take a leading role in this processes based on: Canada's good relations with the Indonesian government, Minister Axworthy's interest in the region, Canada's membership on the Security Council, and active involvement of the Canadian government and NGOs in East Timor development efforts. This role could be played either through:

- UN Security Council
- Foreign Ministers' Friends of East Timor Group
- Canada's own initiatives.

It was suggested that Canada use its seat on the Security Council to flag the possibility of civil war and press the Council to take immediate action to prevent escalation of the conflict and maintain peace and security in East Timor. Here, lessons from Rwanda should be drawn upon to generate political will and mobilise UN resources. While this was fully endorsed, some participants raised the issue that a placement of UN peace-keeping troops could prove unacceptable to the Indonesian government at least until a final decision about the future of East Timor is made. Reflecting on the experience of Haiti with UN peace-keeping troops, others pointed out the danger of perceiving UN forces as a neo-colonial invasion. Some participants, suggested that other opportunities have to be explored.

Given the contentious nature of this path of action as well as the difficulty of forging an all inclusive international consensus, it was proposed that Canada takes a lead in the context of a **Foreign Ministers' Friends of East Timor Group**. This group could either compliment or be independent of the UN process. It could act as a contact and an action group, flexible enough to function as an early warning mechanism and ready to react expeditiously to fast changing circumstances. It could be precisely this group that initiates international activity. More specifically this Group could: