

- The media: also plays a role in providing early warning information, in real time. However, because of the emphasis placed on early reporting and because incorrect information can subsequently be corrected, media organization such as CNN may not thoroughly cross-check information before disseminating it. UN bodies generally do cross-check information thoroughly.
- Analysis: Again, some observers analyze information prior to disseminating it whereas others pass on information as is. Within the UN system, information gets passed to any of four bodies: DPKO, DHA, DPA, or the Security Council. Each of these varies in the level of analysis they can provide. After early warning information is analyzed on a preliminary basis within particular UN departments, it may then be analyzed on an inter-departmental basis, and appropriate recommendations developed.

Individual Member States may also analyze and disseminate early warning information. Ultimately, certain decisions relating to early warning information, such as those relating to Chapter VII, can only be taken by Member States. Thus, discussion of early warning within the UN system will not yield any silver bullets.

Mr. Carlson identified several other problematic for discussion:

- The very act of responding to early warning information -- for example, by dispatching an observer mission to the country in question -- can change the situation on the ground. However, the impact of such action will never be known; e.g. whether it changed the course of events or whether the situation would have evolved the same way of its own accord.
- Information may mean different things in different contexts and in different countries. In Burundi, for example, it may not be uncommon for an average of 60 people to be killed each week in civil unrest. However, were the same to happen in a European country, it might be perceived more widely as a reason for grave concern.
- Certain sensitive information may be available to Member States but not to the UN Secretariat, and so analysis by the latter may be undertaken in the absence of key indicators.

#### **Discussant**

Mr.. Jeremy Bristol, Early Warning Officer, international Alert, described HEWS as an information system of great potential, the first such system to be available. He also described the DHA's ReliefWeb internet site as an excellent body of information, particularly since NGOs are able to feed into it.