

# CANADA on the United Nations Security Council: An update

*The ultimate aim of the Security Council's work is to safeguard the security of the world's people, not just the states in which they live.*

—Former Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy  
ADDRESS TO UN SECURITY COUNCIL  
NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 12, 1999



photo: CANAPRESS

Back in 1998 when Canada campaigned for election to a new two-year term on the UN Security Council, it defined its key objectives: human security; Council leadership and effectiveness; and making the Council more open, transparent and responsive.

Canada won its bid and was elected as a non-permanent member for the years 1999 and 2000. During its mandate Canada twice held the Council Presidency, in February 1999 and April 2000, and it used the opportunity to advance vital human security concerns. Canada's current term on the Council comes to an end on December 31, 2000. A full report assessing Canada's time on the Security Council and our major achievements will be available early in the new year. The report will be posted on the Department's Web site. The following is a summary of key Canadian activities to date.

UN Security Council in session



## Protection of civilians in armed conflict

Canada promoted the protection of civilians in armed conflict as the major theme of its Council membership. In February 1999, as Council President, Canada chaired an open Council debate on the impact of armed conflict on civilians. This led to the ground-breaking report entitled *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Towards a Climate of Compliance*, tabled by Secretary-General Annan in September 1999. The report painted a stark and disturbing picture of modern conflicts, where civilians account for 90 percent of casualties; and it presented some 40 recommendations for addressing the situation. In a Canadian-drafted resolution, the Council endorsed the report and, to lock in the Secretary-General's key recommendations, it established a working group, which Canada was asked to chair.

In another Canadian-led resolution, adopted in April 2000 during Canada's second Council Presidency, the Council again strongly condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians and it spelled out provisions for enhancing the physical protection of civilians caught in the crossfire of conflict. The provisions include: strengthening the UN's ability to respond rapidly when a crisis breaks out; ensuring unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance; in peacekeeping mandates, explicitly providing for protection of civilians, particularly women, children and vulnerable groups; authorizing peace operations to close down hate media outlets; paying special attention to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, including child soldiers; and ensuring greater responsiveness on the part of the UN and the international community to threats of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Taken together, the two protection of civilians resolutions on the Council's books serve as a guide to action. Canada has worked to

ensure that the Council's words on the protection of civilians are matched with deeds. For example, during our time on the Council, three new peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone, East Timor and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been given clear mandates to protect civilians. Canada's advocacy has helped to foster a recognition that threats to people are of equal concern as threats to states. The protection of civilians and human security more broadly have entered the discourse of the Security Council, with conflicts increasingly assessed through this lens, and the Council's response judged against it.

## Peacekeeping

UN peacekeeping operations are at a crossroads. In today's security environment, UN approaches to peacekeeping must better reflect the multifaceted nature of action in countries affected by war. This means helping to promote the rule of law, humanitarian assistance, human rights and economic recovery by better integrating the military, policing, institution building, reconstruction and civil administration functions of peacekeeping operations. Therefore, part of the solution is ensuring that mandates match resources when a new mission is contemplated.

During its Council tenure, Canada pushed for a new approach to authorization of UN missions and deployment of peacekeeping forces. The new challenge before us will be to learn from the past and adopt a forward-looking approach to peacekeeping.

We need to recognize peacekeeping for what it is—a vital component of conflict resolution.

In this respect, Canada firmly supported Secretary-General Annan's initiative to establish an expert panel to recommend ways of improving UN peacekeeping. The Brahimi report, released in August 2000, contains several recommendations that reflect Canadian priorities, for example the need to enhance the rapid deployment of UN operations. The Brahimi report is most welcome because it

highlights, rather than hides, some of the key shortfalls of recent peacekeeping operations. It is the beginning of an important process, one that aims at a critical evaluation of the United Nations, thereby making it a stronger and more effective organization.

photos: UN Photo Unit

Canadian peacekeeper in Haiti



UN peacekeepers in East Timor

