

Nevertheless, the SHIRBRIG was the most advanced mechanism for UN peace operations and this was a foundation to build upon. As authorization for the limited use of force and for protection of civilians had recently become the norm, it was imperative that SHIRBRIG be better prepared for such assignments. A major effort would be needed to recruit new members, expand the headquarters, planning element and brigade pool, as well as to develop appropriate doctrine. Given the challenge of avoiding a more divided and risky world, Canada should encourage forward thinking on complementary national defence reforms and work toward the establishment of a dedicated UN Emergency Service.

(There was no immediate discussion due to time constraints, but the participants returned to address the subject later in the afternoon.)

#### Discussion:

It was noted that broad discussion of this issue began in 1992 with the *UN Agenda for Peace* and by 1994, several like-minded countries were engaged in national studies that would subsequently form the basis for a multinational initiative, which came to be known as the Friends of Rapid Deployment. Although there had been progress in a number of related areas, it was suggested that SHIRBRIG is the only multinational rapid deployment force for UN peace operations.

Almost a decade later, there is no consensus on the future of rapid deployment as some view the need for strengthening existing arrangements and others would prefer the more ambitious option of a new, standing UN mechanism.

One participant warned against being too optimistic about UN rapid deployment, suggesting there was simply too much opposition from the non-aligned movement (NAM). However, the continued opposition of this group was questioned by another participant who indicated the views of the NAM were changing quickly in response to world events; that while there were still three or four strident opponents, the majority of the NAM had helped to initiate many of the promising reforms recommended by Brahimi. Another pointed out that progress has also been made on establishing several rapidly deployable brigades; SHIRBRIG is only unique because it can go anywhere while the other groups (SEEBRIG, OAU, ECOWAS) are regionally focused.