

When one dares to think about the schools and clinics that could have been constructed, of the business enterprises that could have flourished, of the roads and fields that could have been built and tended rather than mined, and of the cultural vibrancy that could have been more freely celebrated -- the tragedy of Sudan becomes even more deeply etched in our minds.

That is why it is important to develop an alternative future for Sudan, and for all Sudanese -- but, most of all, perhaps, for the children.

This vision would be based on a culture of peace rather than a culture of war.

In the past year or so CIDA has provided over \$1.2 million in financial support for a number of initiatives related to the Sudan Peace Process.

These include:

- the Sudan Women's Peace Initiative, which held an international conference in Maastricht in April, supported by CIDA and Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade;
- a Track II project managed by Project Ploughshares in partnership with the Nairobi-based Inter-Africa Resource Group;
- the "IGAD Resource Group" project managed by the Addis Ababa-based InterAfrica Group;
- of course, we also support and work closely with the IGAD Peace Secretariat, and we are very active in the IGAD Partners Forum where we search for ways to support IGAD, the IGAD Declaration of Principles and the Peace Secretariat itself;
- we are also very happy to be one of the funders for this Symposium.

I think it important to point out that, in this list of CIDA-funded projects, civil society features prominently.

Civil society organizations and their membership have been among the victims of the Sudan conflict.

Civil society has a basic right to be heard, and to influence the peace process that will be so central in determining Sudan's future.

Peace-making and peace-building are about more than well-crafted documents, as important as these are.

Civil society leaders and organizations can bring flexibility, inspiration, creativity and, sometimes, sources of expertise or legitimacy that are so often lacking in a prolonged, deep-rooted conflict.