PREFACE

This Directory has been prepared as a contribution to promote practical cooperation and dialogue among the participants in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) on key issues of regional concern, in support of the work of the Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group (ACRS). Canada is involved in ACRS as a facilitator for the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in maritime affairs.

A thorough understanding of the arms control and regional security issues is a key ingredient for progress in the MEPP/ACRS, as is true in any region. In our view, such an understanding is based on timely and accurate information concerning both the background to these issues and on-going developments. The most important contribution to this understanding, of course, derives from information shared among the parties themselves as part of agreed transparency and other confidence building measures. In addition, considerable openly available information on arms control and regional security matters can be obtained by each regional participant. It is with the aim of assisting participants in the MEPP in accessing this latter type of information that this Directory has been produced.

Information on arms control and disarmament has been available electronically for a number of years through direct dial-up over telephone lines to commercial vendors. With the advent of the Internet, however, there is a burgeoning wealth of new information sources that are relevant and often free of charge; though the quality of this information may vary from source to source.

The information that is electronically available today is wide-ranging. It includes, among other things:

- newspaper articles and other current awareness material;
- bibliographic citations to research material;
- statistics and other numerical data;
- texts of key political or legal documents, such as Security Council resolutions or treaties;
- texts of other important documents, such as research reports; and
- directories or menus leading to other sources of information.

Electronic availability of this information is useful for a number of reasons. The diversity of information provides different perspectives and new facts that may not always be readily available through traditional channels. This electronic information can be accessed rapidly from almost any location in the world; virtually wherever there is adequate telephone service. Using computers also permits comprehensive and rapid searching of available information to find the data in which the user is interested. Finally, once located, the information can be easily transmitted to the user, often in a form that can be incorporated directly into reports prepared by the user himself.