

During the past decade, the deep and prolonged recession has made the situation of the poor even more desperate. The presence of this large body of indigent people is at the root of the current social and political upheaval that the countries are experiencing and constitutes the main obstacle to a sustainable peace.³

Former Nigerian Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Gambari, told a CIIPS-sponsored conference on war risk reduction in October 1988 that economic and infrastructure collapse now threaten the very existence of some states. The collapse of social structures and political authority, he said, will pose increasing threats to international peace and security.⁴

The orthodox response of rich nations to poverty and underdevelopment has been development assistance. Yet, as global economic conditions deteriorated through the 1980s total international aid to poor countries remained at the same level. In 1987 assistance was actually less than in 1980.⁵ The ten leading recipients of global economic assistance are: Egypt, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Israel, India, Syria, China, Pakistan, Cuba and Jordan.⁶

Four nations contribute more than half of all the world's development assistance. They are: the United States, which contributes 23 percent, Japan 12 percent,⁷ France 10 percent and Saudi Arabia 8 percent. The total amount of this economic assistance to poorer countries is about \$US 40 billion. Canada contributes about 4.5 percent of the total. Only six other nations contribute more than 1 percent of the total: West Germany 7 percent, USSR 7 percent, UK 3 percent, Kuwait, Netherlands and Italy all contribute

³ Roundtable, Ottawa, 19 May 1988, paper presented by Gabriel Siri: External Cooperation Plans for the Rehabilitation of Central America.

⁴ Kingston, 7-8 October 1988 with permission.

⁵ North-South News, Spring 1989, No. 8 (Source: IMF/World Bank Development Committee, 1988).

⁶ World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-88, Ruth Leger Sivard, Washington, D.C.: World Priorities, 1987, Table II, pp.43-45.

⁷ In 1989 it is possible that Japan will become, for the first time, the largest donor of foreign aid. The national budget presented on 24 January 1989 proposed a major increase in foreign aid to \$13 billion. Japanese defence spending will also be increased to \$39 billion. With increases to both aid and military spending Japan will maintain its 1 to 3 spending ratio.