

Capacity Building to Protect People

Our institutions — global, regional, and national — need reform. As threats to international peace and security change, so must we adapt the institutions and tools we have at our disposal to address them. We will need to build on and reinforce existing multilateral mechanisms and in some cases to negotiate new conventions, agreements and instruments aimed at strengthening protection for people. We will need to invest in a strong UN with the political will and resources to act. Realizing the full potential of regional security organizations will also be important, as will be a fundamental commitment to building sustainable, democratic national institutions.

Ensuring Policy Co-ordination

Human security requires a cross-cutting agenda. The issues are integrally linked at the conceptual and operational levels. Security policies need to be integrated closely with strategies for promoting human rights and human development to produce

synergies in policy and action, including preventive action. The organizations charged with developing these policies will also have to operate “horizontally” rather than “vertically” and co-ordinate their approaches. Effective interventions will require closer collaboration between multilateral organizations, governments, the private sector and civil society groups.

Investing in Knowledge

The human security agenda is knowledge-intensive. Articulating a new conceptual framework for thinking about security, designing sound and informed policies, and defining emerging challenges to the security of people will require an investment in policy research and development. It will require a concerted effort to understand the nature of and the linkages between different threats to people’s safety, in order to develop solutions that are effective, comprehensive and innovative. It will also mean using new communications media to maximize the value and the force of new ideas.

Promoting Complementary Approaches

Complementary approaches will be important. From a Canadian foreign policy perspective, the greatest value added of the human security concept is its focus on protecting people from violence. This conceptual emphasis addresses an important gap in international thinking and action at the turn of the millennium. At the same time, the reality is that human security priorities and approaches will vary across regions and countries: threats to people in one part of the world will often be different from those in another. Since resources are scarce and we live in a world where our lives and our essential security are increasingly inter-linked, complementary approaches — if not identical agendas — should be an important goal.



Children of East Timor accompany a UN peacekeeper as he conducts a security patrol in Dili. (1999)