

- The UN remains a member-based political organization. Its Secretary-General and the Security Council may not share the same views as to what constitutes an appropriate response or solution.
- Ultimately, the early warning issue is one of political will. Burundi is a case in point. Information that a coup was possible was put forth, but there was no willingness to take decisive action.

In summary, in addition to the issue of the existence of adequate early warning information, several other issues need consideration: how early warning is put forth, how it can be made to reach decision-makers, and whether political will exists to act upon that information. The issues addressed by Dr. Dedring touch upon the limitations inherent in "humanware" and in the decision-making process, as opposed to any deficiencies in software or in the breadth of information available.

Procedures for the Analysis and Dissemination of Early-Warning Information

Mr. Stan Carlson, Chief, Situation Centre, UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations, discussed how information is put forth within the UN system, and how this very process leads to complications with regard to early warning. In particular, Mr. Carlson emphasized that many constraints exist within the UN which may not necessarily exist within governments or NGOs, not least the need for caution in dealing with Member States. HEWS exists as a *humanitarian* - rather than a *political* - early-warning system because the latter form would be unacceptable to Member States.

Citing the example of Burundi, Mr. Carlson emphasized that early warning signals must not only be noted but must also be reported, analyzed, communicated to decision-makers, and acted upon. Given this long action-chain which early warning information must pass through, it is surprising that any action takes place at all.

Factors which need to be considered with regard to early warning include the following:

- Trends: There are long- vs. short-term events, some of which are predictable and some of which are not. Most importantly, what is to be done in the absence of a single, obvious event that can be noticed?
- Observers: There exists a wide variety of observers, of varying quality. The UN relies on local governments and populations as well as on a variety of NGOs, international organizations, UN agencies (e.g. UNDP, UNICEF) and foreign governments. The information that each provides varies in quality and detail. In addition, there is a tendency whereby people in the field opt against transmitting bad news.