

- Discussion of the issue of trust and security then led to one surrounding the reintegration of child soldiers in society, and the fact that it usually takes much more than a peace treaty to convince combatants, including these children, to turn in their guns. The need for a mechanism to “de-program” child-soldiers was emphasized. A brief debate on the use of the term “de-programing” or “re-programing” led all to conclude that, for lack of a better term, the word “socialization” probably encapsulated best what was meant as a means of guiding a youth away from their life as a child soldier and the values and mentality that came with that role. The question of the urgency of taking steps to help these children reintegrate into a new fragile civil society led to the question of whether this could be a role played by peacebuilders.
- Several comments ensued concerning the need to find long-term solutions to conflicts. Initiatives to assist populations with the rebuilding of their societies have often proved to be too short in length to effectuate any concrete changes and are not comprehensive enough. State governments may be asked to re-commit funds as well as peacekeepers or peacebuilders to the same area due to the short term “band-aid” solutions that are too often applied.
- A question was then raised as to where Canada priorities in the area of peacebuilding should be set? Obviously, neither the UN nor Canada can afford to get involved in peacebuilding initiatives around the globe in every case where there is a conflict. If long-term social development programs, including socialization and education programs for child soldiers, are to be initiated as part of all peacebuilding initiatives, how do we decide which conflicts would take precedence? Responses were varied. Some voiced their support for the idea of setting priorities on a geographical basis. For instance, Canada’s own efforts could concentrate on conflicts taking place within its own hemisphere. It was noted that if governments focus on nearby countries, the state security and financial benefits to the donor country were obvious. Canada’s involvement in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), its security alignments, and its trade ties were all described as sensible reasons to focus on countries close by. A counter argument addressed the “fairness” of only responding to conflicts that occur in one’s own hemisphere, given the obvious economic strength of the United States in comparison to countries in poorer areas of the world that lack the physical proximity to such a powerful neighbor. It was also noted that Canadian peace builders may encounter language difficulties, for example in a Spanish-speaking country, and that they may not necessarily be best placed to respond to some situations in Latin-America.
- The discussion then turned to the type of assistance often requested by