

4. Canadian Commitment

There is no doubt that Canadians want our future contributions to peacekeeping to be as significant as those of the past. It was asked whether Canada should continue to "cover the waterfront" of peacekeeping or whether it should concentrate in the areas where Canada has the most expertise.

In the past, Canada's contribution to peacekeeping has consisted mainly of personnel and financing. In the current climate of continuing reductions in the strength of the Canadian Armed Forces and with the declining budget, it is probable that more emphasis will be placed on peacekeeping expertise and on the non-military activities of humanitarian assistance, election supervision and policing.

The best peacekeepers are those who have been trained to a general-purpose combat capability level. Peacekeeping requires professionals. A good deal of confidence was expressed in the professionalism of Canadian troops, but participants were reminded that peacekeeping requires more than military skills. At times, it requires knowing how to harness "the power of CNN." There were also participants who pointed to the risk of Canadian soldiers getting involved in others' internal conflicts. For the most part, however, those attending the seminar shared the view that participation in peacekeeping will continue to be in Canada's best interests.

5. Current Capacity of the United Nations

Many felt that the United Nations is in a period of flux as it reorganizes to deal with the rapid extension of peacekeeping requirements. It will need to develop methods and procedures to enable it to command and control effectively the over 50 000 military and civilian personnel currently employed on peacekeeping operations. Although there is a strong case against the United Nations possessing its own standing military force, there are still some who believe this is desirable. Others hold that what is needed is a commitment by governments to maintain certain forces on a standby basis, to be committed to the United Nations in accordance with national interests.

6. Role of Major Powers

In his opening remarks, Professor Legault said the United Nations can serve as an interface between the small and the very powerful. The question was nevertheless raised as to whether one country or a very small group of countries should be able, by means of offering or withholding personnel, goods and/or services, to determine the effectiveness of the organization in meeting its challenges. There was concern that repeated exercise of such perceived powers might have a negative impact on the international legitimacy of the United Nations.