3. Policy Recommendations

3.1 Canada and the UN

Canada's membership in the UN Security Council provides an important opportunity to play a leadership role in raising the human security dimensions of the Burma crisis with other members. Canada should be working with members of the UN to find measures of enforcement to implement the terms of consecutive UN resolutions on Burma, in particular comprehensive economic sanctions and arms embargo.

Canada should also be encouraging the UN system to search for ways of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Burma. In his 1999 report, the UN Special Rapporteur described the current situation as a "humanitarian disaster". This situation will not soon improve and many lives are at risk.

Recommendations to the Government of Canada:

Canada should introduce the subject of Burma as a general discussion agenda item in the UN Security Council.

Canada should initiate a discussion about the humanitarian crisis in Burma with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Canada should request the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene a UN interagency meeting to consider the crisis in Burma.

Canada should seek to formalize the existing Burma informal consultative mechanism of the UN Secretary General and promote it as a forum for the coordination of international policy and strategy.

3.2 Sanctions with Teeth: The Special Economic Measures Act

In 1997, many Western nations concluded that engagement with Burma was ineffectual. The United States imposed unilateral investment sanctions against Burma, while Europe and Canada imposed limited trade sanctions. In justifying its action, the Canadian Government noted that "Canada's promotion of international human rights is founded on our long-standing principle of effective influence. Dialogue and engagement generally offer the best vehicle to effect change. Dialogue is, however, impossible without a willing partner. Burma's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has consistently rebuffed efforts by Canada and other countries to engage in dialogue."