

The enormous needs of the South are undisputed, yet the Committee was informed that in the last eight years Canada has made cuts to its actual and projected ODA in the amount of \$3.7 billion. Prior to the government's "minibudget" Canada's ODA was 0.45% of GNP. The 2 December 1992 budget reduced Canadian foreign aid by 10%. This is well below the target of 0.7% GNP agreed to in Agenda 21.²⁵

The end of the Cold War has been recognized by many as an opportunity for countries to redirect military spending to projects of benefit to humanity. Many of the witnesses appearing before the Committee expressed the hope that the Canadian government would identify a "peace dividend" and reallocate a portion of defence funding to ODA. This is indeed a worthy consideration; however, it must be recognized that Canada is already an international leader in the provision of humanitarian aid through the large involvement of the Canadian military in the peacekeeping activities of the UN. To our credit Canada is the only country that has participated in all of the UN peacekeeping operations since 1947. Large numbers of Canadian troops are presently involved in the distribution of humanitarian aid. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada provides armed escorts to protect food and medical relief convoys; while in Somalia, Canadians are assisting in the prevention of mass starvation.

Mahbub ul Haq, Special Adviser to the Administrator, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), told the Committee that tremendous "peace dividends" are potentially available in even the desperately poor countries of the developing world. An UNDP study estimated that a freeze in military spending in developing countries could potentially release \$50 billion over the next decade. The liberation of such an enormous sum would greatly enable poor nations to finance their own development agendas.

It has been suggested that developed nations are partially responsible for the large military expenditures made by many poor nations. Mahbub ul Haq stated that the present allocation of ODA reflects an old pattern of military alliances, when developed nations fought the Cold War by proxy. The UNDP study showed that today in developing countries twice as much aid per capita goes to the highest military spenders as compared to low military spenders.

Mahbub ul Haq stated that tremendous benefits could be realized in developing countries if aid was linked to real objectives:

...the objective of reducing poverty, the objective of increasing human development, the objective of discouraging military spending, the objective of encouraging human rights.²⁶

The restructuring of ODA is, perhaps, as important as the level of aid going to developing countries. Mahbub ul Haq asserted that aid must be directed to where it will do the most good, to human development, to health care, education and population control.

... we can have population control, but human development itself is the strongest contraceptive, particularly female literacy.²⁷

The issues of poverty, population control, health and education, are often overlooked as genuine environmental concerns. However, as serious as pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss are, they are in reality only the symptoms of a greater environmental malaise, overconsumption, desperate poverty and overpopulation. The impoverished peasant, whose immediate problem is family sustenance, has little time or interest for the concept of sustainable development.

²⁵ "Rio Earth Summit: Meeting ends with hope, disappointment", *Chemical and Engineering News*, Vol. 70 (25), 1992, p. 4.

²⁶ *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Environment*, Issue No. 51, 2 February 1993, p. 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.