

sanctions on Liberia; the establishment of a United Nations Observer Mission, UNOMSIL; and the authorization of ECOMOG's presence in Sierra Leone. Earlier attempts to deploy a UN peacekeeping operation were blocked by the RUF. The security situation in Sierra Leone is such that UNOMSIL's mandate cannot be delivered at present. The authorization remains active, and a small number of personnel remain in Conakry and Freetown, so that the UN presence can be increased rapidly when circumstances permit.

The Council's inability to act more vigorously on Sierra Leone can be attributed to: i) the absence of key conditions for a 'classic' UN peacekeeping deployment (i.e. cease-fire, consent of the parties); ii) the difficulty associated with deploying a UN peacekeeping operation given the great danger to peacekeepers and the great difficulty of access and supply; iii) the fact that ECOMOG's presence lessens or eliminates the requirement for a more robust UN peacekeeping operation; and iv) the reluctance of some Council members (especially the US) to commit additional resources to new and/or invigorated peace support operations.

ECOWAS countries providing troops to ECOMOG in Sierra Leone would welcome greater attention from the Security Council including financial assistance to underwrite the cost of the ECOMOG operation in Sierra Leone.

Canada's Role

If Canada decides to become more involved, it is clear that our contribution would be most welcomed. Many senior officials in the region, including the President of Sierra Leone, the Prime Minister of Guinea and the Vice President of Ghana, made this point very clear to our delegation. In addition, some noted that our membership in both the Commonwealth and the Francophonie could help bridge the gap between Anglophone and Francophone Africa. Our first move should be to request to participate as an observer at meetings of the ECOWAS Group of Six. The US and the UK are already doing it. Ambassador Traoré of Côte d'Ivoire has assured us of his government's support in this regard. Canada could play an important support role in the dialogue/negotiations process since it is perceived as "neutral" and with no "hidden agenda" in this matter. For example, through its Peacebuilding Fund, Canada could provide competent NGOs with the financial support to assist in the peace process and the national reconciliation effort.

Canada has the potential to play a significant and meaningful role in the resolution of the crisis in Sierra Leone. However, in order to become an active participant in the diplomatic effort, Canada must be prepared to make a substantial contribution to the security and humanitarian needs of the country.