

The ethnicization of international relations might occur at a point when a country, having a seizable group of its nationals living on the territory of another state, comes under pressure from its own population to intervene on behalf of their ethnic kin. This risk is nowhere greater than in the republics of the ex-Soviet Union, where the presence of a Russian minority, if inadequately protected, might eventually trigger conflict with Moscow.

As Europe re-discovers its ethnic diversity, particularly the mosaic of populations in Central in East-European states, the inability of states to deal adequately with minorities could create a dynamic of inter-state relations similar to the one that existed between the two World Wars, where protection of ethnic kin became a pretext for annexation. While such a scenario might seem to be out of keeping with the realities of the 1990s, it is not impossible. The emerging solidarity of the Islamic world with the situation of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an example of how affinity, in this case religious, could have an impact on inter-state relations.

Increased diversity of populations in the industrialized states, together with unabated migration pressure from the poorer ones, plus emergent anti-immigrant illiberalism among the most developed countries, might create a chemistry conducive to inter-state conflict along ethnic or religious lines. The migration pressure will not diminish. Ninety-five per cent of world population growth is currently taking place in developing countries, at 2.1 % a year, exacerbating already serious problems of poverty and environmental degradation.<sup>13</sup> The North will have to adapt its policies and political structures to respond to these challenges and new realities.

### THE CHALLENGE:

The nature of the challenge facing the international community in the field of minority rights is clear:

**to break the deadlock in which minorities find themselves, squeezed between nation-states trying to preserve the integrity of their authority and an international system that does not recognize collective or communal rights and cannot effectively protect the rights of the persons belonging to a minority.**

As suggested in the introduction, one approach could be the development of credible international guarantees for the protection of human and minority rights. We should also look at possible ways to regulate, through constitutional means and/or international covenants, the possible multiplication of secessionist movements. In practice, this could mean the establishment of a balance of rights between states and "peoples", including minorities and individuals, in the international legal system.