

INTRODUCTION

International concern regarding security in refugee camps has heightened during the past decade. In an effort to grapple with this complex problem, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade hosted a workshop in Ottawa from 22-23 March 2000 on the potential roles of international police in refugee camp security. The workshop focused on situations of serious insecurity in refugee camp environments, where the presence of international police might be employed to assist humanitarian agencies responsible for camp management. Emphasis was placed on identifying under which circumstances police would be deployed and with what mandate and capacity. The workshop also touched on the roles of other actors in enhancing refugee camp security, as workshop participants identified from the outset that this task is multi-disciplinary in nature and requires a wide range of 'skill sets' to ensure the safety of the residents and staff in refugee camps.

The workshop had three broad objectives:

- to define security issues in refugee camps and identify protection problems which might benefit from the presence of international police, as well as approaches and potential solutions to these problems;
- to identify the abilities and the appropriate roles of relevant actors (in detail for the police, in general for others);
- to assist the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in their policy development.

To achieve the goal of multi-disciplinary planning, the workshop brought together representatives of the international police community, military personnel with peacekeeping experience, specialists with immigration and refugee claims backgrounds, diplomatic and legal experts, and officials from humanitarian and human rights non-governmental organizations. Some participants came from states with a long history of hosting refugee populations. As a means of sharing information among various actors interested in refugee camp security, a list of participants is included at the end of this document.

In pursuing the objectives listed above, participants drew on their own professional experiences as well as work done in other fora, in particular the United Nations Security Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Although all participants were experts in their fields, it took some time to reach common understanding of the vocabulary and capabilities of each. Once achieved, the security and humanitarian practitioners found themselves redefining the problems and potential options for addressing insecurity as they gained an appreciation of other facets of the issue. This led, consequently, to an emphasis on the importance of an integrated approach, and a recognition by workshop participants of the interdisciplinary nature of camp security and of practical ways to work together. In this regard, the planning phase of a mission was identified as particularly important. Participants also stressed the need to ensure the availability of adequate resources for camp security and suggested ways to engage the international community. Some roles for international police were identified, with emphasis placed on assisting local police and providing security advice to humanitarian workers.