Stabilizing Failed and Fragile States

Among the greatest contemporary security threats are those resulting from a large number of fragile and poorly governed states. These countries pose a dual challenge for Canada. The refugee flows that they create not only represent a humanitarian tragedy, but also undermine the stability of neighbours and entire regions. More ominously, the weakness of failed states makes them obvious breeding grounds for terrorist networks and organized crime, which can directly threaten the security of Canadians.

Although the first line of responsibility to citizens lies with national governments, when they collapse, Canada and the international community share a responsibility toward the people who are the victims of state failure. Canada's strategy to address the multiple challenges posed by failed and fragile states must be focused, first and foremost, on preventing state breakdown. Preventative action can take many forms, but clearly includes long-term development assistance that helps to build a set of institutions, civil society and political culture that is conducive to security and prosperity. The adequate provision of health and education services and a vibrant private sector are essential building blocks for peace and stability.

Where devastating events have already begun to unfold, members of the international community must also possess the capacity for rapid intervention that can stabilize the situation on the ground and restore security for the local population. Integration between military operations and civilian assistance is an essential feature of this intervention capacity. So too is a flexible funding mechanism that can facilitate a rapid response to a humanitarian emergency.

Canada is taking a leadership role in helping people in regions of conflict regain stability and build lasting peace. The Government will mobilize the international community, including Africans, to stop the ethnic cleansing and massive abuse of human rights in the Darfur region of Sudan. In addition to humanitarian aid for Sudanese, Canada is also providing financial support for the International Criminal Court to prosecute war crimes committed in Darfur, and is providing training and other assistance to the African Union's peace operations. In the Middle East, Canada will encourage the early signs of emerging peace between Israel and the Palestinians by assisting the Palestinian Authority in undertaking social, economic and security reforms. In Afghanistan, where Canada has already made a significant contribution—from military action to election support—we will soon establish a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kandahar, bringing together our diplomatic, military and development instruments to deliver a better life to people there. We are already applying this new, integrated approach in Haiti, where we are helping rebuild an accountable, competent police force. In Iraq, Canada will continue to play a major role in reconstruction and development, chairing the international donors' committee for that country.

PRIORITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Establish a Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) to plan and coordinate rapid and integrated civilian responses to international crises

KEY INITIATIVES

- Establish links between START and crucial partner departments, especially National Defence and CIDA

- Establish a Global Peace and Security Fund to support START and other urgent civilian contributions to crisis response operations

- Create links with counterpart taskforces in partner countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom