

are trying to help. Peacebuilding is not about imposing solutions, but about working with countries to fulfil the promise of the UN Charter to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." It is about helping individuals, communities and states create their own opportunities for sustainable peace by building institutions responsive to their needs.

In this context, we have two great assets in Canada that can be put to use in peacebuilding. The first asset is the wealth of skills and institutions that Canadians have developed in nurturing our own democracy, which can be put to good use in war-torn societies. We have developed these skills in our legislatures and our electoral authorities, in our local governments and our media newsrooms, in our police forces and our courts. Canadians young and old, in business, labour, non-governmental bodies and the professions, have expertise that could be deployed abroad in building sustainable peace. The true measure of our leadership in peacebuilding will be the degree to which we manage to mobilize those talents effectively.

The second asset is Canada's head start in the field of information technology. Information technology by its nature is a good match with peacebuilding. It is a rapid, flexible and inexpensive means of sharing information and expertise. It can of course be used to collect and analyse information and provide an early-warning function. But its potential goes well beyond this. We should be using information technology to maintain the in-country capacity we have helped develop, long after Canadian experts have gone home. For example, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre could use new technologies to keep in touch with its foreign graduates in their home countries around the world. These technologies could also be used to supplement training of peacebuilders here in Canada, by ensuring that lessons learned in one operation can inform future peacebuilding activities.

Example of Peacebuilding

Haiti, since the return of democracy on 1994, is a good example of what I am talking about. In Haiti peacebuilding has complemented peacekeeping operations, by creating the conditions for sustainable peace during the transition from conflict to longer-term development. The UN peacekeeping operation in Haiti now includes, in addition to its military mandate, a substantial peacebuilding component: the training of civilian police and the co-ordination of institution building, national reconciliation and economic rehabilitation activities. Canada is deeply engaged in both aspects of the UN mandate. There is a proverb in Haiti that "the law is paper and the bayonet is steel." Peacebuilding gives the Haitian people the capacity to make the transition themselves from using steel to using paper to solve their problems.

The challenge now is to build on our innovative work in Haiti, so that we have the capacity to respond more rapidly, and in an equally innovative way, as urgent needs arise in other priority countries and regions. It is the scope and complexity of the peacebuilding challenge that led us in government to take a number of measures that together form the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative.

The Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative

My colleague the Minister for International Co-operation, Don Boudria, and I have agreed that there is an urgent need to co-ordinate our programs and policies that support conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. There is a need to establish priorities and to spend our money strategically. There is a need to mobilize extensive Canadian resources in peacebuilding. In sum, there is a need for a catalyst that can mobilize and bring together ideas, actions and funds. In the light of this, we have decided to launch a Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative.

As the term "initiative" implies, we are taking the first steps in what we expect to be a longer-term process. We already possess many of the tools needed to respond to complex emergencies — many Canadians within government and outside of it are already engaged in peacebuilding — but we need to create a new way of organizing our activities. Our aim is not to take over existing activities, but rather to ensure that they work together in a coherent manner.

To do this we must ask ourselves a number of questions: