



Canadian Foreign Policy and Peacebuilding Victoria Report

Setting the Context

The National Forum was held on October 26, 1996 in Victoria, and brought together people of various disciplines from across the province in an attempt to engage citizens in an open, consultative process. The goal was to provide feedback to the Minister and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade regarding policy options in the area of Canadian foreign policy and peacebuilding.

In an international climate that poses new and difficult challenges (ie. the proliferation of intra-state as opposed to inter-state conflict), it is necessary to explore new means of addressing these challenges. As a result of the changing international political environment, the concept of peacebuilding has emerged as a process which, while associated with the western world's long standing tradition of peacekeeping, has a different goal. Peacebuilding efforts are an attempt to create a situation in which long-term sustainable human development is possible.

With this in mind, the Forum participants were brought together to help devise new mechanisms to deal with the increasingly diverse dimensions of international conflict and post-conflict situations.

This report is divided up into two sections. The first section deals with the policy development process, issues and trends, while the second

section includes summaries of the three policy group discussions.

Process for Discussion

In order to define the parameters of the forum, it was necessary to develop a framework that would guide the discussion, but not place undue restrictions on the participants. In an effort to do this, the participants were split into three groups that would address three separate, but interconnected issues: Civil Society, Constitutional and Governance, and Reconstruction. The established goal was to provide input and policy options to the Department of Foreign Affairs regarding the initiation and coordination of Canadian peacebuilding efforts. Each group was given the following questions to help focus discussion:

1. what strengths do Canadians bring to the task of peacebuilding in terms of our political values and institutional capabilities (both governmental and nongovernmental);
2. should we focus Canada's peacebuilding role, ie. on prevention (pre-conflict), on peacekeeping on a geographical basis, on post-conflict reconstruction (rebuilding of civil society);
3. what is the most appropriate mechanism to ensure Canadian policies and practices within peacebuilding are coherent, coordinated, and maintain capacity for rapid, on-going, flexible effective responses.

Issues and Trends

While the framework of groups provided ample opportunities for participants to engage in vigorous discussions on a variety of topics