

Peacebuilding and Criminal Justice – Yvon Dandurand

- The government of Canada has made a commitment to open its foreign policy to all Canadians. This is particularly important in the areas of criminal justice and human rights. In the last year, the Government of Canada has established the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development and the John Holmes Fund to support discussion of foreign policy issues among Canadians.
- Today's forum was made possible by a financial contribution from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. There has already been several other events held in Canada, over the last year, many of them dealing specifically with the subject of peacebuilding and including a national forum in Ottawa, at the beginning of February 1997.
- However, previous consultation meetings have not tended to focus specifically on justice related issues as they pertain to the peacebuilding process.
- In 1996, Minister Lloyd Axworthy announced a new Canadian initiative to provide Canada with the mechanisms it requires to do a better job as part of international peacebuilding initiatives. Canada's peacebuilding initiative, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, aims to increase Canada's capacity for rapid, coordinated and flexible responses to intra-state conflicts. Since then, a Canadian stand-by roster of human rights experts has also been created to assist with the human rights activities aimed at building capacity in societies previously ridden by violent conflicts.
- The concept of peacebuilding, as it is currently understood, presupposes a very interventionist approach on the part of participating countries. Such an interventionist approach is apparently supported by the Canadian public, in the name of the protection of human rights and in order to affirm important values such as democracy and respect for the rule of law. However, many people are still confused about the concept of 'peacebuilding' itself:
 - It is not always clear how one country can go and build peace in another country?
 - What about the social and civil implications?
 - What do we mean by peace?
- Related issues:
 - What concrete protection can realistically be offered to human rights in a post-conflict situation?
 - What is democracy? Is it really always a pre-requisite to peace?
 - Is our concept of liberal democracy necessarily the concept that the target country embraces?
 - Behind the concept of peacebuilding, and as a justification for