

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Bernard Wood

Bernard Wood, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, opened the conference with an overview of some of the major issues associated with climate change, global security, and international governance. He pointed out that effective responses to climate change will require strategies of both prevention and adaptation. In this process, the allocation of the costs and benefits of action and inaction was expected to be the source of human struggle and conflict. It is clear that resource and environmental pressures can contribute to the outbreak of war, having already had this impact in many parts of the world such as Central America, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East. Natural increases in resource demand as a result of population growth and increased consumption threaten further competition and conflict. Mr. Wood also identified environmental refugees as additional evidence of the effects of changing climate on conflict. He warned that diverse climate change could increase the stakes dramatically.

In pointing to the need for international cooperation, Mr. Wood raised a central question of whether this new global challenge can be met using existing institutions such as the United Nations, whether these must be modified, or completely new institutions created. He argued that regardless of the institutional options pursued, the response must be equitable and sensitive to the different needs, resources, and responsibilities of both the industrialized countries and the developing world. The industrialized world's track record, he noted, has not been encouraging in building truly effective multilateral cooperation, and North-South cooperation in particular.

Mr. Wood concluded with a discussion of political constraints and opportunities. He pointed out that multilateral institutions and international non-governmental bodies can go no further than the collective will of their national governments. Mr. Wood was confident, however, that the "will of ordinary people" to manage the threat of climate change is becoming increasingly apparent. In stressing the urgency of the problem, he