

numbers of working children imply large numbers of untrained and unemployed adults. Now, spurred in part by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the global community has begun to act. Canada is taking a leading role in building a world consensus around an effective action plan that will reverse the alarming growth in the number of child workers which the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates today as around 250 million worldwide.

The second priority for Canadian foreign policy is the protection of our security within a stable global framework. This is where the issue of children in zones of conflict becomes so important. As Graça Machel recognized in her powerful report to the UN on the subject delivered in the fall of 1996, in recent times children have become more than accidental victims of conflict between adults, they have become targets, deliberately killed or wounded during ethnic conflict, intentionally raped and violated, forcibly recruited as combatants. Such gross abuses of their human rights are likely to have grave implications for the behaviour of those who survive. So we must pay attention to the millions of children of this generation who are caught up in armed conflicts. How can we protect them from the worst consequences of war? And when hostilities cease, how can we take the war out of them? Eliminating landmines, controlling the sale of small arms, raising the age of recruitment are all essential measures. Reuniting children with their families and providing programmes of physical and psychological rehabilitation, an important focus for our overseas development assistance, are also helpful ways to prevent future outbreaks of violence. To diminish the potential for violence in a world where the impact of even a minor war can affect us all is a crucial foreign policy objective.

The third foreign policy objective of the current government, the projection of Canadian values and culture abroad, has particular significance for the promotion of children's rights. Polls consistently demonstrate that Canadians continue to value the qualities that were so important to Lester B. Pearson: tolerance and respect, social justice, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, participatory democracy, a place in the world defined by common human goals rather than by the exercise of power. We are faithful supporters of the United Nations and its member organizations: UNICEF, UNESCO