

Minister Axworthy

Lloyd Axworthy talks to **Canada World View**

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We intend to be a very active member of the Security Council. I have focussed on issues of peace and security in the past year or two, and the Security Council is the main international body responsible for promoting those goals. I think the problem is that the Security Council has historically been rather conservative in how it defines "security" and mostly reactive to situations of conflict. We will be pushing for the Council to broaden its concept of security to include conflict prevention and peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian issues, as well as to be more proactive. Kofi Annan, the current UN Secretary-General, has been moving the organization and the Council in this direction, and we hope to add to that momentum.

Canada World View

You have expressed some criticism of the UN system, particularly the Security Council, and you have called for reforms. In addition to encouraging a broader agenda and a more proactive approach, what kind of reforms would you like to see take place, first at the Security Council level and then throughout the UN system?

Minister Axworthy

A key element of our campaign is to work to make the Security Council more open, transparent, and responsive to the membership of the UN as a whole. If members are contributing to peacekeeping efforts or other Security Council missions, then we can't just make decisions on their behalf. We need to share information and allow for some feedback.

Canada World View

Over the past 18 months or so, you have talked about a new concept in world affairs — that of "human security" and peacebuilding as opposed to state security and peacekeeping. Can you elaborate on this new approach?

Minister Axworthy

The human security concept is basically a recognition that the world has changed. There are fewer conflicts between countries. Wars are more often internal, they are religious and ethnic in nature, and innocent civilians are increasingly the victims of this violence. We have seen it in the massive refugee flows in places like Kosovo and Central Africa. So the focus of attention needs to move from the security of the state to the security of the individual. At the same time, a lot of other problems are crossing borders with greater ease — illicit drugs, terrorism, weapons, environmental concerns — and these have a direct impact on our own citizens, on the air we breathe, and on the safety of our streets. Again, these are issues that affect the security of individuals, and a new approach is necessary. We need to take a fresh look at what sorts of international laws and norms and co-operative efforts are needed to deal with this — hence our involvement in landmines and in pursuing the International Criminal Court. And we have learned it can't be done alone.

Canada World View

1999 will be a very busy year for Canada on the international stage, with several major events taking place such as the G-8, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie summits. What will be the major themes on Canada's agenda at these summits?

Minister Axworthy

To the extent we can influence the agenda, these meetings are an opportunity to advance the human security agenda I've just described. Canada hosts La Francophonie in Moncton and the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, so these are also an opportunity to showcase the diversity of our country.



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In a few words, what would be your assessment of Canada's foreign policy achievements and action during the twentieth century — which Sir Wilfrid Laurier said would be "Canada's century"?

Minister Axworthy

I think in many ways we have achieved Laurier's vision. For several years, the UN has said we are the best country in the world to live in. We are not the greatest economic or military power, but in many ways we are a model for the world for the century ahead. We are a country that celebrates our diversity, has developed good social programs, has a strong economy, and works hard to promote its values and ideas internationally.

Canada World View

If only one of your wishes could come true in 1999, what would be the most important achievement you would like to see accomplished in the world?

Minister Axworthy

I hope in a year we can make significant progress on a number of issues, such as small arms and children in war. It's not easy to pick one. I guess 1999 will also be a year of thinking and preparing for the next millennium, and I hope that reflecting on the past century, and how violent it has been, will strengthen the resolve of the international community to make the next century much less violent. ●—