

Canada. Out of this rethinking two key concepts have emerged: human security, and, as the means to secure human security, peacebuilding.

I have already spoken about the concept of human security, when I addressed the United Nations General Assembly this fall. The concept of human security recognizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, good governance, sustainable development and social equity are as important to global peace as are arms control and disarmament. It follows from this that, to restore and sustain peace in countries affected by conflict, human security must be guaranteed just as military security must. This is where peacebuilding comes in: as a package of measures to strengthen and solidify peace by building a sustainable infrastructure of human security. Peacebuilding aims to put in place the minimal conditions under which a country can take charge of its destiny, and social, political and economic development become possible.

I see peacebuilding as casting a life line to foundering societies struggling to end the cycle of violence, restore civility and get back on their feet. After the fighting has stopped and the immediate humanitarian needs have been addressed, there exists a brief critical period when a country sits balanced on a fulcrum. Tilted the wrong way, it retreats into conflict. But with the right help, delivered during that brief, critical window of opportunity, it will move toward peace and stability.

This is not, of course, an easy thing to do. These are highly volatile situations, where the needs are many and the time to respond is short. An effective response often requires co-ordination among organizations — non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the military, and civilian experts — that usually work independently. It requires horizontal thinking that cuts across military, diplomatic and aid-based solutions. And it has become clear from the events in Bosnia, Rwanda and now Zaire that, while its thinking may have evolved, the international community does not yet have the tools it needs for the task of peacebuilding. In Bosnia, for example, military peacekeepers found themselves rapidly drawn into a whole range of urgently needed civilian functions for which they were not trained or equipped.

The Mechanics of Peacebuilding

The time to develop those new tools and mechanisms is now. Responding to the challenge of peacebuilding will not be easy — it will require a leap of faith. Canada is poised to make that leap, to offer an example of leadership to the international community. Whatever the risks, the international community can no longer afford to hesitate on the brink while more countries descend into cycles of bloodshed and ethnic hatred.

As proof of our willingness to take a leadership role, we have made our Ambassador to the United States, Raymond Chrétien, available to act as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes region. As a former Ambassador to Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire, Mr. Chrétien has extensive expertise in the region. He will be departing for the region within the next few days, to establish the facts on the present conflict, defuse tension and seek regional solutions. This mission embodies the traits that characterize the mechanics of peacebuilding:

Willingness to take risks: Peacebuilding is aimed at situations where the risk of failure is much higher than in traditional multilateral activities; but there are cases where the costs of inaction are so high that the international community must be prepared to accept this risk.

A rapid, co-ordinated and flexible response: Peacebuilding deals with situations where speed is of the essence. It requires a response that links security, economic and social development, and governance, and that addresses the real problems of particular regions or states.

Preparedness: It follows from the need for a rapid response that to be effective in peacebuilding we need to develop stand-by capacity in Canada, and to carry out ongoing analysis, priority setting and early warning.

Partnerships: Peacebuilding calls for partnerships with Canadian citizens and NGOs, with other donor countries, with international organizations and, above all, with the countries we