

At the outset of this study, we decided to focus primarily on the operational side of this issue. We have not, of course, divorced ourselves from the wider political context. We are well-aware of the crucial need to mobilize the political will in order to respond to crises. Indeed, I understand participants have been spending some time here identifying key political questions the United Nations is faced with when responding to crises, and I encourage you to continue this work.

Having said that, Canada's study has been based on the view that our best immediate contribution to this debate is mainly an operational one, focussing on providing the UN with new instruments as part of a wider process of conflict management.

Since my speech to the UN General Assembly last September, a lot of work has been done, in Canada and in a number of other countries as well, notably in the Netherlands and Denmark. This meeting today is critical to refining recommendations that I can put to the UN at the General Assembly next September. My colleague, the Minister of National Defence, mentioned yesterday a few ideas currently in play. Allow me to mention a number of others upon which we are currently focussing.

One of our concerns is providing the Security Council with timely military advice. We, and others, emphasize the importance of meaningful consultations with troop contributors. But we need to think of mechanisms for troop contributors to provide their views to the Security Council, particularly on the military side, as planning proceeds and as mandates are being negotiated.

On the "strategic level" of the UN system, we also need more coherent crisis management structures. Normal peacekeeping operations move at the same relative pace as planning, which, as we all know, can be slow. But crisis situations demand a different approach. The key, in our view, is advance planning and quick execution. Staff must be continuously acquiring information and developing contingency plans. All of this must be done in advance of crisis. Countries that have the capacity to help in this area must be brought in at an early stage. This is why I am attracted to the idea of an operational rapid-reaction headquarters that can put together these different requirements. I understand it has been in discussion here, and I look forward to hearing more about it.

We also need to do more work with regional organizations, at all three levels of actions I mentioned - preventive diplomacy, rapid reaction and peace building. The United Kingdom and France have launched initiatives in Africa. The Organization of African States [OAS] has stepped up its efforts in the field of conflict management. Canada also feels that it is now time for La Francophonie to play a preventive diplomacy function. Burundi is the first test that comes to mind, of course. In this regard, at