

there lessons to be learned from the land mines process for furthering other humanitarian causes? One of the reasons for selecting the land mines issue was attributed to its relative singularity or independence from other socio-economic, cultural and political issues (i.e., structural contexts).

4. HUMAN SECURITY, THE UN SYSTEM AND INITIATIVES

Steve Lee from the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development introduced **Ramesh Thakur**, Vice Rector, UN University, Tokyo, Japan. Steve Lee thanked the participants for a timely, useful and topical discussion. He also drew attention to Canadian partnership with Norway and Australia and acknowledged the significance of the Norwegian efforts in the land mines ban.

Thakur outlined the changing "security" framework within which the UN operates. He argued that instead of perceiving the realist concept of national security as dichotomous to the emerging concept of human security, the two should be seen as coexisting. In this way national interests and values can be pragmatically married in the post Cold War environment (dominated by issues including internal strife that is often state-generated, poverty, and inequality). He also stressed the necessity for the UN to achieve an ideological balance between idealism and realism and to narrow the credibility gap between aspiration and performance.

Thakur pointed to the growing dissonance between the form and substance of the UN process. While issues such as human rights are increasingly taken up by the NGO community, the UN remains state-centric. (The establishment of the International Criminal Court is an example of the decline in interest of the U.S.A. in Human Rights issues and the growing role of the NGOs). Democratic empowerment remains alien to the UN system as well as many governments around the world.

Despite the financial and bureaucratic difficulties as well as the risk-averse nature of the Secretary General's position, the UN remains at the legislative and normative centre of the international system. Its authority is rooted in the sense of international solidarity transcending national perspectives and sectarian affections. "Only the UN through its authenticated procedures can lay claim to speak on behalf of the entire international community." For standard setting, norm generation and regime creation, there is no real alternative to the UN. NATO has no such capacity. The necessity to endorse, even retroactively, the NATO aggression in Kosovo by the UN Security Council is a proof that many supporters of the war remained troubled with the precedent of collective military action outside the UN framework.