

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A day long workshop hosted by the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) and the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development was held March 20, 1998 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Among the multi-sector grouping of 15 experts were journalists, lawyers, human rights advocates, an NGO representative, former diplomats, DFAIT and CIDA officials, former UN officers, a management consultant, academics and researchers. Some participants had recent experience in Cambodia, all were current and well-informed and shared a concern for Cambodia and its future (see Appendix A: Participants list)

Peacebuilding in Cambodia, a report by Chris Cooter for Peacebuilding and Human Development Division, DFAIT (March 3, 1998) was provided in advance of the workshop as background reading. The objective of the roundtable was to provide policy recommendations to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ottawa, on Canada's role in Cambodia during and after the upcoming July 1998 elections.

To set the context and provide current information in the morning session, a video filmed two days before and featuring **Gordon Longmuir**, Canadian Ambassador to Cambodia, was presented. Ambassador Longmuir provided an overview of the current political climate in Cambodia including an outline of the Friends of Cambodia and the Japanese Four Pillars initiative.

Kate Frieson, Southeast Asia Program Associate, Centre for Asia Pacific Initiatives, University of Victoria provided an historical analysis of the electoral process. Ms. Frieson spoke about the lack of social cohesion, constraints on non-governmental organizations, internal government dissension, personalized politics and the impact of economic liberalization. (Stephen Owen, Director, Institute for Dispute Resolution, UVIC, and member of Cambodia's Dispute Resolution Centre was unable to attend due to illness, but was interviewed a few days later). The group concentrated their discussion on the role Canada should play during the electoral process.

The afternoon panel focused on the role Canada should play in the post election process - the role of NGOs, CIDA, universities, and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Former Ambassador to Cambodia, **Martin Collacott**, presented a background on the tensions of leadership, the narcotics trade, financial weaknesses, Cambodia's increased isolation and the role of China. Lawyer and former UN human rights officer in Cambodia, **Kathy Neilson**, emphasized the long-term assistance needed by Cambodia despite the election outcome, particularly to the provinces for education, humanitarian aid, and institution-building.