



This would fit with the recommendation of the second National Forum meeting to focus on "civilian peacekeeping" as a priority for Canada. Again, these associations could be linked together as well as inventoried for the Government, using Internet-technology;

- making selected Canadian universities "Centres of Excellence" on peacekeeping issue areas such as humanitarian law might well be a low-cost and effective contribution to civilian peacekeeping;
- capacity-building in peacekeeping is crucial, and should utilize existing focal points of peacekeeping expertise;
- continued public consultation in foreign policy development through vehicles such as this Forum which promotes communication between policymakers and civil society, is beneficial to groups which often see themselves in opposition.

Observations of the process

The Focus Group process does tend toward consensus where alternative ideas might get marginalized; the challenge for the rapporteurs was to extract common concerns and recommendations coming from the group without glossing over the differences.

The groups did not address many of the issues raised in the "issues for discussion" section of the background materials circulated prior to the meeting. In particular, geographic and/or sectoral focus was not dealt with in any serious manner. This is such a major topic that it could constitute the agenda for an entire meeting. Time constraints limited the number of issues discussed and the depth of the debate.

A good mix of people were represented in each group. In particular, having a refugee from the

former Yugoslavia, who could share her first-hand knowledge and perspective was particularly helpful. Youth participants expressed their appreciation for being involved in this process.

Recommendations for next year's Forum

- A longer period of time (perhaps two days) might be better for the groups to produce more concrete recommendations.
- It would be better to have the material on Canadian foreign policy, peacekeeping, development, conflict, etc., which was available on the day of the Forum, available in advance so that participants could come to the Forum with the same basic knowledge.
- There is a need for better communication and feedback from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies.
- Links with other Forum meetings need to be established (i.e. copies of other meeting reports could be distributed to our region, and vice versa; representatives from other regions could attend the Forum here; general information could be exchanged regionally rather than going through Ottawa, etc.).
- Forum meetings could be planned with some time in between to allow for exchange of information and ideas between regions.
- Universities (especially those with international relations/foreign policy centres in the Security and Defence Forum network), could be developed as centres/foci for civil society activity on foreign policy issues.
- Participants would like to know what will happen to their recommendations.