

Interview with Paul Heinbecker

DFAIT's senior officer responsible for global and security policy talks with **Canada World View**

The term "human security" may be of recent origin but the ideas that underpin the concept are far from new.

For more than a century—at least since the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the 1860s—momentum has been gathering for a doctrine based on the security of people. Core elements of such a doctrine were formalized in the 1940s in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions.

Yet despite these legal instruments, human rights are violated on a daily basis around the world. What can be done to change this sad reality? This is the question *Canada World View* asked Paul Heinbecker, Assistant Deputy Minister (Global and Security Policy) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

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Mr. Heinbecker, first of all, can you explain to us how the concept of human security was developed and how it became a central element of Canadian foreign policy?

Mr. Heinbecker

First we have to look at the concept of sovereignty, which goes back some centuries. The Westphalia Treaties of 1648, which put an end to the Thirty Years' War and which established the notion of national sovereignty, gradually changed the nature of society in Europe.

The end of the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations in 1945, followed by the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN, marked a turning point. As the world became more democratic, it naturally became more concerned about the safety of people.

Spectacular technological developments in the last 50 years—particularly television, satellites and now the Internet—contributed to a dramatic change in the way we perceive the world. Images of merciless and bloody conflicts in Europe, Africa and elsewhere come to us every day, engaging our conscience.

Another key factor is the fact that the nature of war itself has changed. Wars used to be fought between professional armies. Now, warlords deliberately target the most vulnerable: women, children, the poor and the weak.

This made us realize that while the concept of national sovereignty is necessary, it is not sufficient as a central organizing principle in international affairs. Between 1990 and 1995, some 70 states were involved in 93 internal and regional wars that resulted in more

than 5 million victims. We realized as well that globalization brought new threats to people's safety: drug trafficking, terrorism, transnational crime, people smuggling, small arms proliferation and others. In the practical response to these threats, the concept of human security was born. It is fair to say that Minister Axworthy pioneered both the concept and the practice.

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Have there been any concrete results yet?

Mr. Heinbecker

There have. If you look at the Landmines Treaty [see article, p. 8], it is clear that when governments, non-governmental organizations and ordinary citizens work together, positive things can be accomplished.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone is another example. For the first time, a UN mission has been given the mandate, within the limits of its capabilities, not only to maintain peace but also to protect civilians whose lives are threatened.

In many other areas Canada is working in partnership with like-minded countries in such multilateral forums as the UN, the G-8, the Organization of American States, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. The aim is to achieve progress on issues such as the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the protection of and assistance to war-affected children, the campaign to reduce accumulations and trade of small arms, the protection of humanitarian workers, the negotiations to establish the International Criminal Court, the promotion and protection of human rights internationally, the 12 conventions against terrorism, the proposed transnational organized crime