

Canada ratified the Convention on Combatting Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in 1998, and, at the Organization of American States (OAS), Canada signed the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption in June 1999, ratifying it at the Windsor OAS General Assembly in June 2000. Canada also strongly supports the start of work on a UN Convention Against Corruption, to be negotiated in the next few years in Vienna. Canada will continue to focus attention on the issues of corruption and transparency, including by seeking wider adherence and support for these international instruments.

## Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Respect for freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and access to information, is a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. The suppression or abuse of such freedom can lead to violent conflict and human rights violations by generating or exacerbating tensions along ethnic or religious lines, or by encouraging a breakdown of confidence in government. Restrictions on freedom of expression may also limit the degree to which violations of human rights are known and investigated, and thereby also perpetuate government corruption and impunity.

Canada has taken international action on this issue through the UN and regional mechanisms and by contributing to new projects in affected areas. Support for the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression is a priority, especially through the encouragement of effective interaction with other special representatives and commissions of enquiry. Efforts are under way to develop and strengthen monitoring capacity for freedom of expression in the Commonwealth, the OAS and other regional forums. Also important are local capacity-building projects, such as assistance aimed at strengthening free media, in order to ensure that the means for expression and opinion are established and varied.

## The ICC Training Manual

By holding accountable those who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, the International Criminal Court is expected to counter impunity, contribute to the prevention of atrocities and make a critical contribution to human security. The Rome Statute to establish the ICC, adopted in July 1998, has now been signed by 97 countries. Sixty states must ratify the Statute and adopt implementing legislation before the Court becomes operational. To date, 12 states have done so. Some states have encountered legal obstacles, due to the complexity of the Statute.

To help move the process forward, Canada has provided support to two Canadian NGOs — the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy and the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development — to develop a manual to assist states with making the legislative changes required to ratify and implement the Statute, and bring the ICC ever closer to realization.

## Democratic Governance

The absence of inclusive and responsive political institutions may contribute to political and social exclusion and discontent, destabilization and, in some cases, violent conflict. By contrast, democratic political institutions entail structures of governance that promote and ensure political access, responsiveness and accountability.

Promoting democratic governance is key to building a society's institutional capacity to manage conflict without violence. Canada will continue to contribute to global and multilateral efforts to strengthen democratic governance, particularly in areas at risk of or recovering from violent conflict. This will involve targeted contributions to regional and international organizations that are active in this field, as well as support for targeted policy research and institution-building activities. Emphasis will also be placed on the constructive use of new technologies to strengthen dialogue and civic participation.

## Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporations can play a constructive role in human rights, democratic development, environmental protection, disaster response, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the communities in which they do business. The growing interest in corporate social responsibility arises in large measure because of the importance of international trade and investment in shaping the priorities of national governments and institutions.

Corporate activities have drawn attention internationally with respect to international labour standards, protection of the environment, bribery and corruption, and — particularly in areas of conflict — humanitarian considerations. Canada's approach is to promote and encourage the reflection of internationally agreed norms and standards in the overseas operations of Canadian companies. This is best achieved by continuing to encourage dialogue between all stakeholders on these issues and by supporting initiatives that foster positive corporate contributions to the social and economic environments in which businesses operate.

*Members of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia investigate a mass grave northwest of Srebrenica, Bosnia. (1996)*



*CP Picture Archive:  
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