

Regarding the investigatory powers of CIVPOL in Namibia, Mr. Proke revealed that CIVPOL did have an investigative arm, but that the success of its investigations depended on information gleaned from a usually uncooperative SWAPOL. He admitted that these investigatory powers were faulty, suggesting that in similar situations a portion of CIVPOL should be part of a joint-force investigative mechanism. Another participant made the general observation that perhaps ONUSAL's human rights investigative function can profit from the experience of CIVPOL in Namibia.

The Role of NGOs and Private Observer Missions

Andreas Guibeb, a Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Ministry in Namibia, noted that without diminishing UNTAG's role in his country's transition to independence, it was, after all, a team effort. Much of UNTAG was supported by and depended upon contributions made by NGOs including observer missions. He cited, for example, the importance of observer-group press conferences, which maintained the pressure for free and fair elections. Mr. Guibeb also pointed to the vital contribution of the Council of Churches in Namibia in the resettlement, repatriation and reintegration of exiles and refugees.

Senator Alasdair Graham observed that unlike official representatives, NGOs are not in a controlled environment: they can visit the people, unfettered by government interference, and get a true picture of what is going on. He cited the official visit to the Philippines in 1986 of US Senator Richard Lugar whose itinerary depended on the Filipino government. Largely because of that government control, Senator Lugar initially assessed the political situation in the Philippines incorrectly. It was the private observer groups who, free to go where they pleased, got it right.

Similarly, Mr. Thornberry advised that UN operations also have to work under a mandate and therefore must often bite their tongues. The crucial function of the observer missions, he noted, is saying what the UN operation cannot.

Many participants discussed the usefulness of outside observer missions in helping to develop an indigenous monitoring capability, which once developed, lessens the urgent need for outside observers.

Potential Problems

A number of problems were raised regarding civilians in peacekeeping, specifically relating to the Namibian experience as well as to the subject in general.