

2.2 The very severe financial constraints on public finances are due primarily to debt servicing costs. According to the IMF, before rescheduling, debt servicing absorbed over 50 percent of government revenues in 11 of the 13 franc zone countries in 1994, the exceptions being Burkina Faso and Benin. The slowness of the rescheduling of bilateral debt and its gradual replacement by multilateral debt must be of concern to bilateral donors belonging to La Francophonie, including Canada.

2.3 Economic and financial constraints (notably structural adjustment programs) are aggravated by restructuring of the State, too often seen as no more than a *management committee*. Thus, the solutions cannot be purely technocratic; they must also be political. It is important that the people directly involved in rethinking the role of the State and in the institutional reforms play a central part in the current debates. This could be achieved by, for example, broadening existing discussion forums and creating new ones (in La Francophonie and elsewhere).

2.4 The very idea of the *origin* of conflict needs to be clarified, given the large number of factors involved, their different weight in different countries, and the very meaning of the term *prevention*. To be sure, a number of early warning signs of conflict were relatively easily identified, such as human rights violations, rising political violence, increasing predation at the top, the privatization of politics, banditry, the presence of open conflict nearby, the level of friction generated by the reform process, the exploitation of tribalism, etc. But while it appears clearer that internal control methods play an important if not decisive role, the search for solutions is a complex and multidimensional process, requiring both short-term actions and long-term actions, such as support for development strategies. Stronger support for civil society, particularly women's groups and grassroots economic groups, was seen as a priority in this respect. From a broader point of view, the need for Africans to reclaim ownership of the analysis of the State, and especially of its role in redistributing wealth, is particularly relevant in this context.

3. Current Strategies and Possible Solutions (SECTIONS 3 and 4)

Like its partners in La Francophonie, Canada must, in many cases, seek immediate solutions to open conflicts or acute crises; this should not, however, prevent us from conceiving and applying prevention as a long-term strategy. The two approaches, which call for different types of interventions, are not and should not be mutually exclusive in Africa or elsewhere.