

INTRODUCTION

Canada occupies a unique position in the Americas. An ally of the United States, Canada actively supports the Contadora process, enjoys good relations with the Latin American nations and maintains a substantial development assistance programme in Central America. A member of the Commonwealth and of *la Francophonie*, Canada is actively involved in the peacekeeping missions and other activities of the United Nations. As various observers have noted, these are aspects of an intermediary role which Canada can play both in the Americas and globally, a role that could become increasingly important in regional conflict resolution. Numerous polls have shown that there is strong domestic public support for advancing negotiated solutions in Central America. Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and churches sponsor a wide variety of humanitarian and development assistance projects in the region, participate actively in foreign policy debates and also favour an enhanced Canadian role in peace promotion.

Public concern with promoting peace in Central America, combined with extensive governmental experience in international peacekeeping, have led the Canadian government on several occasions to provide technical advice to Contadora on verification and control mechanisms needed for the effective implementation of a peace treaty. Recently, it offered these services for the implementation of the accord signed in Guatemala on 7 August 1987, by the five Central American Presidents.

The holding of a Roundtable in Ottawa on Interim and Confidence-Building Measures in Central America reflects Canada's position as an intermediary. The Roundtable focused on bilateral and multilateral policy initiatives that could contribute to the Contadora-led peace process. More than forty participants, from Latin America, the United States, Europe and Canada — government officials, representatives of international organizations, academics and members of a broad range of NGOs — analyzed the current situation and debated policy options in four sessions held over two days: 8-9 May 1987. These centred on the following themes: Present and Future Prospects for Peace in Central America; Interim and Confidence-Building Measures — the Instruments available; Interim and Confidence-Building Measures — the Politics and Mechanics of Implementation; Multilateral and Third-Party Roles and Initiatives. The first two sessions explored the positions of different governments and the principal issues involved in the Central American conflict; the third and fourth sessions focused on the policy alternatives available for reaching settlements.