

3. Considering sanctions: a case-by-case approach

Participants identified three 'baskets' of issues which Canadian policymakers must address when faced with decisions pertaining to UNSC sanctions: a) whether to support the use of sanctions, b) what sort of sanctions (if any) to promote, and c) how to ensure that Canada's voice is heard during Council debates concerning sanctions.

a) Whether or not to impose sanctions

The decision of whether or not to impose sanctions is a complex one, and will be influenced by a variety of factors pertaining to the character of the potential target, the objectives sought, and, crucially, the policies of other states.¹ Participants agreed, however, that this decision should be based on projections of effectiveness and humanitarian impact, and not on domestic political pressure.

Participants expressed enthusiasm for policies involving positive incentives (carrots) as complements or alternatives to sanctions, but they were pessimistic about the willingness of states to contribute to such initiatives, and wary of the implications of 'rewarding' objectionable behaviour. It was also noted that the constitution of the Security Council makes it ill-suited to the development of programmes of positive incentives and other initiatives aimed at pre-empting crises.

There was widespread agreement that the effectiveness of sanctions is often enhanced by an accompanying threat of force, as long as that threat is viewed as credible. Some participants

¹ For a discussion of these factors, see Barry Burciul, "United Nations Sanctions: Policy Options for Canada," (DFAIT, 1998.)