

Comparative Advantages of the UN

Drawing on its universality, neutrality and physical presence in many parts of the world, the comparative advantages of the UN are: global objective-setting; advocacy and monitoring in areas such as human rights, population and the environment; the provision of neutral policy advice; collection and dissemination of information; providing access to the world for some of the poorest countries; and providing a framework for international humanitarian activities. These are not rigid categories, but rather are suggestive of a framework for channelling the energies of the UN to areas that can really make a difference.

Improving UN Effectiveness

One important step is to eliminate duplication and ensure complementarity with other institutions, such as the Bretton Woods group. We believe there is a need to re-examine how the trade and development function is handled in the UN in light of the emerging mandates of the World Trade Organization. The role and contribution of the UN regional economic commissions also merits close attention. Canada will wish to be certain that the vast array of intergovernmental machinery that has developed over time adjusts to future needs.

We advocate strengthening the human rights and environmental functions within the UN. Dealing more effectively with humanitarian needs is also important, through improved early warning arrangements, "preventive development" and a more seamless continuum between relief, rehabilitation and resumed development. This is especially pressing in conflict situations. The Rwandan tragedy has demonstrated that early warning capacity and conflict prevention should be further reinforced and dealt with in conjunction with development problems.

Strengthening the coherence and impact of the General Assembly and the ECOSOC [Economic and Social Council] in the economic and social fields is essential. ECOSOC must fulfil its co-ordination role within the UN system and be key in the follow-up to international conferences. We are open to the idea of an enlarged bureau of the ECOSOC, but that is no substitute for improved coordination with the specialized agencies. It is time to consider how better to reflect the greater integration of social and economic issues in the work of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly.

The deliberative role on global economic issues of both bodies can be improved, but they should not try to compete with more specialized bodies. The value of the General Assembly and ECOSOC lies in bringing moral and political force to global objectives, not in designing specific mechanisms. A further opening of the