

B. Diagnosis of Conflicts and Prevention Mechanisms

Workshop 1: Conflict Prevention from an African Perspective

a) Development assistance and conflict prevention

Development assistance can contribute effectively to conflict prevention, provided that the current criteria for assigning and implementing assistance are properly reviewed. The first day's work led to the drafting of some guidelines.

First of all, aid must be tied to respect for human rights. Democratic development, a condition essential to the establishment of peace, can exist only where there is respect for human rights. At the very least, la Francophonie should be able to exert pressure on its members when they commit serious, systematic violations of fundamental rights. Participants expressed the need to intensify information exchange in this regard.

Conflict prevention also requires that the people affected have increased opportunities for participation in the planning and management of development programs. Women and youth in particular must be involved, for example by promoting community projects.

The question of military expenditures was also dealt with. It was recognized that these must be reduced and the resources redirected as far as possible to education, health and other priority areas. In general, meeting military requirements costs far more than satisfying basic human needs. The struggle to meet such needs is often a source of conflict.

The problem of debt was also seen by many as a major obstacle to conflict prevention, since debt holds back economic recovery and fuels social tensions. Furthermore, development assistance might be used simply to repay the debt if nothing is done to correct the situation. This issue must be included in the debate on development assistance.

In the same spirit, another look must be taken at structural adjustment programs, which are still considered to be the main instrument of recovery. Not only have these programs proven to be ineffective from the viewpoint of economic recovery; they have had disastrous social consequences, which have not been offset by compensatory measures such as "social adjustment dimensions."

Some participants stressed the importance of speeding up the process of allocating and delivering assistance once it has been promised. Frequent delays in the delivery of promised aid too often heighten frustrations and give rise to passivity and cynicism, which in turn generate conflict.