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5. Technology

Some participants emphasized the role new Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) can play in imparting information and connecting communities. Through ICTs, our values as Canadians can be spread instantaneously across the Hemisphere. In this context, Canada could capitalize on its “geo-political” position as the “Scandinavia” of the Americas to promote the “culture” of Human Security, distinct from that of the United States, said Liss Jeffrey (McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology).

ICTs could also help nurture engaged and well informed publics, strengthening democratic governance at home and abroad. Therefore, ICTs should be central to the Hemispheric agenda. Initiatives should be developed aimed at narrowing the “digital” divide between poor and rich countries and creating a public “digital” space for policy discussion and deliberation.

While some insisted that the provision of clean water and basic human necessities should take precedence to closing the digital divide, others responded by saying that leaving the poor regions out of the “global village” would marginalise them even more in the longer run. Steps should be taken to facilitate public access to ICTs even in the poorest countries, together with helping to meet basic human needs.

6. Aid, Emergency Assistance and Disaster Preparedness

The need for improvement in the quality and quantity of aid was often expressed. Canada could develop initiatives in disaster relief (with a particular focus on youth and women) aimed at building resilient communities.

7. Institutional and Procedural Challenges

Many agreed that Canada should strive to improve the OAS process. The agenda for Quebec City should be practical (i.e., topical, credible, cost-effective), manageable, and fall within the context of Human Security.