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This is a positive development, because the long-term Canadian interest is in fostering the *capacity of regional organisations* to take a leadership role in designing and implementing such projects in a manner that is appropriate to the regional context. At this time, the Canadian government is looking at the capacity of African organisations to offer training in the areas of peacebuilding and peacekeeping. An initial survey of what is currently available is proposed by the Institute for Defence Policy (South Africa), with the support of the OAU and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (Canada). Such an approach would enable the OAU to use African resources while enhancing its own capabilities, and still draw upon valuable Canadian expertise, which also provides Canada with a visible partnership.

Some participants also raised the issue of *government consent* to multilateral conflict prevention activities. It was argued that a culture of transparency must be promoted among the members of the OAU, in order to combat the current norm of information control and closure. One of the best ways to encourage openness and engagement with external assistance is to work through NGOs, and to build up partnerships between African and Canadian NGOs. This sort of cooperation, it was argued, enhances the capacity of African groups to engage in independent analysis and action where consent is not an issue.

## **SESSION II: LA FRANCOPHONIE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION**

Recent efforts to introduce a conflict prevention role into the activities of la Francophonie have been initiated with an eye towards making such preventive action complement the existing OAU Mechanism. The initial idea of putting conflict prevention onto la Francophonie's agenda was first raised by Canada at a ministerial conference in Ouagadougou in December 1994, in reaction to the relative inaction of the international community on the Rwanda violence. Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet also announced at that time that Canada would organise a conference on this subject.

This conference, the International Francophone Meeting on Conflict Prevention, was held in Ottawa in September 1995. Forty-six countries participated, including almost all of the member states of la Francophonie, as well as Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Tanzania. After three days of discussion, a consensus was reached that such a new role for the organisation was appropriate. This agreement reflected a recognition among the member states that