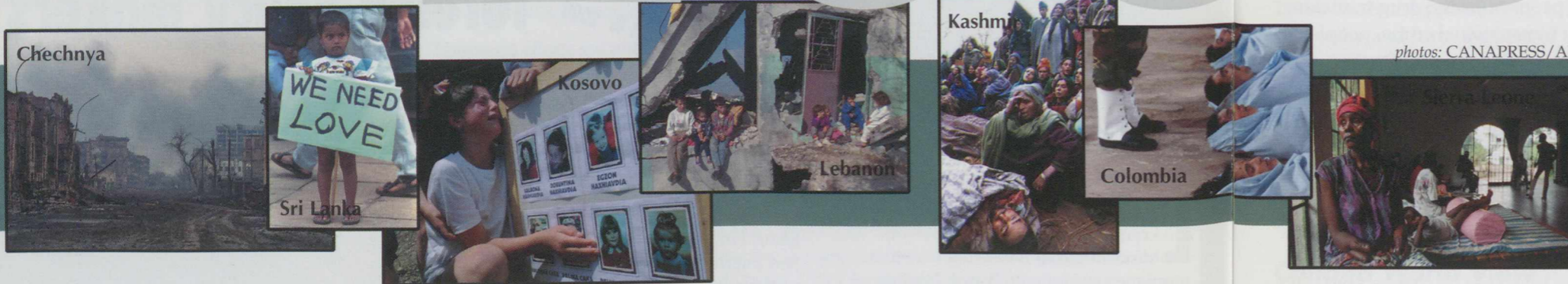


Protecting People **From War**

Canada's human security priority in 2000



photos: CANAPRESS/AP

Wars have always been horrific. Until a decade ago, however, most casualties were military and only 5 percent of victims were civilians. Now civilians account for up to 80 percent of casualties, and wars are increasingly fought within rather than between states.

Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy said recently, "Civilians have increasingly become tools of warfare—herded about to destabilize governments, pressed into military service, held hostage, exploited sexually, used as human shields. Such attacks are most often carried out with impunity in direct violation of international law. It is now clear that the victimization of civilians is a central component of modern armed conflict."

ability to respond rapidly when a crisis breaks out, notably through rapidly deployable units; imposition of arms embargoes; greater use of targeted sanctions against belligerents; and, in the face of massive and ongoing human rights abuse, consideration of appropriate international action.

Protecting children

Protecting civilians starts with the most vulnerable: children. The record of the past decade is grim: close to 2 million children killed, more than 4 million disabled and over 1 million orphaned. More than 300 000 girls and boys—some as young as age 7—served in armies and rebel groups as fighters, porters, messengers, spies, labourers and sex slaves. Over 10 million were psychologically scarred by the trauma of abduction, detention, sexual assault and witnessing the brutal murder of family members.

Mr. Axworthy has made the issue a central priority of his human security agenda. "Promoting children's security is indispensable to promoting human security," he says. "We cannot possibly hope to build a secure world without due regard to those who will inherit it."

Among possible actions, Canada strongly supports the inclusion of child protection specialists in UN peacekeeping operations, and it is examining ways to ensure that children's rights and needs are a central consideration in every stage of conflict. In April, when it again presides

over the Security Council, Canada will promote specific measures to strengthen human security and increase the protection of children in conflict situations.

International conferences

On April 27 and 28 in Accra, Canada and Ghana co-host the West African Conference on War-Affected Children. The aim is to bring governments, civil society and youth together to produce a concrete plan of action for addressing the multiple needs and problems of the region's child victims of war. Among the topics for discussion: disarming and demobilizing child soldiers; the role of the military in child protection; and rehabilitating and re-integrating war-affected children.

In September, Canada will host an international conference examining various aspects of the plight of children affected by war, including East Timorese children who have lost access to schools and health clinics, ethnic Albanian children traumatized by conflict in Kosovo, and child soldiers in Sierra Leone who were exploited and forced to commit atrocities. Participants are expected to agree on a common approach and specific actions for war-affected children. ●

The Darker Side of Globalization Modern threats to the security of people

While war is the main threat to the security of the individual, there are many others: a growing illicit drug trade, the lethal traffic in small arms, migrant smuggling, terrorism, transnational crime and more. These are manifestations of a disturbing trend in international affairs: the globalization of direct threats to the security of the individual. Such global challenges require a transnational response. Canada is a leader in combatting the threats in two key related areas: the trade in small arms and in drugs.

Small arms

Each year, 700 000 civilians are killed by small arms fire. Because they are inexpensive, simple to use and portable, small arms lower the barrier for violence and terror. Their widespread availability multiplies their lethal effectiveness and makes conflict easier. They have truly become weapons of mass destruction and they are often in the hands of civilians, rebel forces and makeshift militias.

At the European Union (EU) Foreign Ministers Meeting in Helsinki in September 1999, the EU and Canada took a common approach to the problem of small arms accumulation, creating the EU-Canada Working Group on Small Arms. The EU and Canada will promote international and regional efforts to curb the use of these weapons.

In December 1999, representatives from Canada and 17 other countries identified key areas for attention, including arms brokering, documentation, anti-diversion procedures, international standards and regulation, legislation and enforcement, training, and information exchange.

Illicit drugs

By its very nature, the closely related illegal drug trade is a direct threat to the safety of the individual. Canada recognizes that no aspect of the drug problem can be dealt with in isolation from the surrounding economic, social and political circumstances. This is why it is taking a holistic approach to stemming the flow of illicit drugs. For example, Canada recognizes the links between the illegal trade in drugs and the trade in firearms, as well as the need to involve local interests in the design and implementation of anti-drug policies. In the field, this means working through embassies to provide assistance to local organizations or promoting alternative crops in a way that avoids distortion of local economies.

What these efforts have in common is a human security focus. For many, it is a new and unfamiliar way of dealing with the issue. But as Minister Axworthy says, "There is room for a holistic approach to the drug problem, and human security offers that approach."



Cambodia