

Some "old constraints and new opportunities" for early warning are summarized in Table 3. Recent breakthroughs in information gathering, analysis and dissemination have been possible, thanks mostly to the rapid increase in computing power and the availability of the Internet. Still, this increase in information collection and handling has not resulted in a functioning early warning (EW) system. No unit within the UN Secretariat, including the office of the Secretary-General, has yet produced a series of early warnings. While the UN is not expected to match the major powers in the ability to gather and process information about impending threats, in order to do early warning, its capabilities need to be substantially increased.

#### **IV. Recommendations: Towards an Effective UN Early Warning System**

In the past few years, the constraints on developing early warning systems have been financial and managerial, as well as political and technical. The recent past has been characterized by deep financial cuts, loss of posts and institutional retrenchment. Still, with the UN reform process under way, there is reason to hope that an effective early warning system, as a vital component of effective conflict prevention and preparedness, can yet become a part of the UN Secretariat. The following recommendations are offered for consideration by the UN and its member states, such as Canada, which has been a strong supporter of UN early warning.

**\* A single body should be designated with overall responsibility for the function of early warning (EW). This EW unit should be accountable for failures at early warning.**

Comment: Currently, the responsibility for early warning is spread out among several departments. In such a case, it is easy for each body to ignore the early warning responsibility, and evade the risks to be taken by issuing early warnings. It is proposed that one unit be held accountable for any lapses. While early warning can continue to be included in the mandates of several departments, one person (e.g., the unit chief) should be given the primary and coordinating role and made accountable. This will put the onus on that person/unit to produce early warnings. It should be accountable for both missed opportunities and for false alarms.

**\* A learning mechanism should be part of the early warning system (EWS).**

Comment: Failures to issue early warnings, which can be expected to be frequent, should be