

## REPORT FROM THE ROUND TABLE ON HUMAN SECURITY AND WATER CONFLICT

*The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, at the request of the Foreign Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, organised a round table in Ottawa on April 13, 1999, on Human Security and Water Conflicts. Participants included specialists on water-related issues, engineers, NGOs, conflict resolution experts, IJC experts, students as well as officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canadian International Development Agency, and Environment Canada. The round table addressed key water-related issues (water-resources, water-management, water-conflicts) in the broader framework of human security. The following is a report from the day-long discussion.*

### SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Following welcoming and introductory remarks by **Steven Lee**, National Director of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, **Ralph Daley** of UNU opened the discussion with a brief presentation on the *State of the World's Water*. Professor Daley contended that growing water shortages from uneven distribution, wastage, and pollution coupled with rising water demand due to population growth have contributed to intensifying competition for fresh water resources. (20% of the world's population, concentrated in 30 countries, face water shortages -- a figure that will rise to 30% of the world's population, in 50 countries, by 2025. Meanwhile, water demand is increasing at twice the population growth rate). This competition is reflected in tensions over the purpose of water use (i.e., for household, industrial, or agricultural use), transboundary disputes over water quality and quantity, as well as past and present conflicts/wars.

Growing water scarcity has serious health and ecological implications and endangers the quality of water. If no action is taken to address these issues we may be faced with reduced resilience in human and ecological systems, increasing climate change, water-related diseases, salinisation, water pollution, collapse of aquatic ecosystems and water supplies, mass refugee migrations as well as escalating armed conflict.

Daley estimated the total cost for sanitation and safe water to be \$25 billion per year for 10 years. The best ways of dealing with the global water problem, he pointed out, would be through integrated water management (holistic, ecosystem-based, managed at the river basin level, aimed at reconciling the competing water demands with supply) and capacity building (including the social capacity to educate and train; the scientific capacity to monitor and assess the aquatic environment; the institutional capacity to plan, legislate, regulate and achieve compliance; and the economic capacity to provide sustainable services and products).

The next speaker was **Jennifer Moore** from Environment Canada. She spoke about how