

## *INTRODUCTION*

### **Purpose:**

Since the end of the Cold War, the United Nations, regional and inter-governmental organizations have been increasingly required to assume greater responsibility for preventing deadly conflict. In response to this challenge, multilateral organizations, their member states and non-governmental organizations have developed many new co-operative approaches to conflict prevention. There is a need to take stock of recent innovations in different parts of the world, to refine these approaches and to analyze how they could be adapted to other regions. The goal of this seminar was to begin such a dialogue.

### **Sponsors:**

The seminar was organized and sponsored by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the International Development Research Centre. It was co-sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the International Peace Academy, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. The seminar was held in Ottawa at the IDRC, from March 11-13, 1998.

### **Participants:**

The seminar brought together senior practitioners from around the world to share their approaches, insights and experience in conflict prevention. The invitees were selected from a broad cross-section of the principal regional and inter-governmental organizations involved in conflict prevention, as well as the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Senior diplomats involved in shaping member states' policies towards these organizations were invited, along with representatives of non-governmental organizations that have worked with multilateral organizations in conflict prevention. Representatives of the organizations sponsoring and co-sponsoring the seminar also participated in the discussion. The seminar was chaired by Gordon Smith, Chairperson of the Board of Governors of IDRC and former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

### **Focus of the Discussion:**

The seminar took a broad definition of conflict prevention, covering not only preventive diplomacy, but also the promotion of human rights, democratic development, and socio-economic development. The emphasis was on preventing conflict at an early stage through preventive diplomacy and pre-conflict peacebuilding. The discussion focused principally on intra-state conflicts, since in the 1990s the vast majority of conflicts that have compelled the attention of the international community have started within states, rather than between them. Furthermore, most of the innovations in conflict prevention in this decade have been developed to address intra-state conflict. Nevertheless, the discussion also took stock of new methods to reduce tensions between states in regions of the world where the risk of inter-state conflict remains a serious challenge.