

II. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF WORKSHOPS

A. Overall Concerns

While dealing with specific themes on their agenda, the three workshops also addressed a number of common issues, the most important of which were the following:

a) In recent years conflicts have been dominated by intra-state crises in which socio-economic problems and the lack of democracy are intertwined. Social and ethnic groups are involved simultaneously as the perpetrators and victims of violence. This situation has led conflict prevention to address new problems requiring considerable adjustments such as wider circulation of reliable information — problems necessitating information, analysis and training.

b) In the new context, effective conflict prevention rests on multi-dimensional preventive policies (development assistance policies, promotion of democracy, consolidation of the rule of law, preventive diplomacy, etc.). This is why traditional policies toward Africa must be refocused on creating conditions of security and stability.

c) Conflict prevention will clearly fail if the timely and accurate assessment of a risk does not lead to timely decisions. At present, reaction times are too slow to cope with the volatility of the African situation.

d) Through the values it upholds and the means available to it, la Francophonie has already contributed to prevention. However, given its innovative nature, it has the capacity to do more. Exactly how to do this must now be determined.

e) The effectiveness of prevention in Africa rests on the support of the OAU — in particular its Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution — and on sub-regional organizations. Prevention must expand to civil society and its organizations.

Some topics seemed to require more extensive discussion. How might a country successfully make the transition to democracy? How might the concept of national sovereignty be kept from becoming an obstruction to solidarity should the likelihood of conflict arise? Given the multitude of urgent problems, how might concrete, realistic priorities be set so as to gradually regain control of the situation?