

The roundtable was held at DFAIT headquarters on 17 July, 1998. David Malone (DG, Global and Human Issues, DFAIT) and Nasreen Bhimani (Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development) welcomed the participants to this opportunity to contribute to the development of Canada's policy regarding United Nations sanctions. Mr. Malone situated the discussion within the context of Canada's campaign for UN Security Council membership, and expressed the hope that the roundtable would further Canada's efforts to bring a distinctive, pro-active approach to the Council.

Prof. David Black (Dalhousie University) opened the first session with a summary of the background paper, "United Nations Sanctions: Policy Options for Canada," prepared by Barry Burciul (University of Toronto). Prof. Black drew attention to the challenge of crafting sanctions which are guided by concerns of effectiveness and humanitarian impact, rather than a desire on the part of governments to "do something." He cited the "amateurish" nature of past sanctions regimes as evidence of the urgent need for reform, while noting the daunting obstacles to reform that were discussed in the background paper.

Prof. Black observed that the context of sanctions is changing in three ways. First, while UN Security Council sanctions are becoming more popular, their effectiveness has been impaired by the difficulty of achieving a broad-based coalition around strong measures. Secondly, the Council has begun to "download" responsibility for the administration of sanctions (and the amelioration of their negative effects) to regional organizations and NGOs. Finally, the experience with sanctions against Iraq has cast a pall over efforts to reform the broader practice of sanctions.