

certain international trends, especially the active cycles of United Nations conferences (on women, population, environment, trade, social development, human rights).⁴ In fact, Canada sought international recognition for its leadership in involving Canadian NGOs in its conference preparatory work and even on official delegations. UN reform debate now recognizes the importance of the global NGO movement and its policy roles.⁵ Indicatively, NGOs addressed the UN Security Council for the first time in fifty years in February 1997.

The public "space" for policy work has expanded:

- a) Political support has grown. Early ventures in public-government policy engagement met the seemingly implacable resistance of public officials and Ministers. But by the mid-1980s, there has been active political support for public participation in international policy as higher priority is placed on public participation, consensus building as well as the search for "outsider" ideas. Political support is a reflection of the response to the public's desire for greater involvement in the public policy process.
- b) Practical pressures promote expansion of policy roles. "As foreign ministries face more issues at greater depth with less money," notes analyst Evan Potter, "there is an increased need for closer collaboration between Canada's

⁴ "The overwhelming interest and participation of all kinds of organizations in the UN global conferences organized in the 1990s is not accidental. This is the 'tip of the iceberg' in a wide social process affecting all the continents: the emergence of organized civil society." See The Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life 1996, Caring for the Future: Making the Next Decades Provide a Life Worth Living, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 262.

⁵ See for example The Commission on Global Governance, Our Global Neighbourhood, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, especially pp. 253-262.