

SESSION III: Early Warning, Early Action: The Relationship Between Early Warning and Early Response by Governments and the UN System**The Experience in Somalia**

Ambassador Robert Oakley (Ret'd.), Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Center for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, provided insight into the Somalia experience, beginning with an overview of what happened in that country between 1989 and late 1992 -- the period during which the UN and the international community intervened in various ways to stop civil war, or at least to mitigate its effects.

Ambassador Oakley mentioned the importance of the media - both print and, later, television. Their coverage of the situation and the intense lobbying by NGOs resulted in the decision of the U.S. Government to get involved.

Ambassador Oakley argued that there was no lack of early warning information on Somalia but rather a lack of attention and political will. The problem within the UN, NGOs and the U.S. Government was that action on Somalia was pushed for, but not hard enough. Only when the pressures started building was action taken. The U.S. decided that a peace-keeping force was not going to do the job and subsequently sent in the Marines. A strong international response followed once the "ice was broken". Somebody had to take action in order for others to be willing to follow.

The experience in Rwanda

Ms. Lucie Edwards, Director General, Global Human Issues Bureau, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, stated that the Rwanda Joint Evaluation was successful in debunking several myths about events in that country. The most notable myths are: a) the crisis came like a thunderbolt from a clear blue sky, i.e. the international community did not know; and b) before the crisis erupted in April 1994, the international community was generally indifferent to what was going on in Rwanda, i.e. we did not care.

In fact, the international community did know about Rwanda. The crisis was well-known and long-standing. While the war in the early 1990s did not get much attention in Canada, it was highly publicized in Europe and regularly discussed at the Security Council. There was an intensive effort on the part of Rwanda's neighbours and the international community to resolve the conflict by facilitating the return of Tutsi refugees and the negotiation of a power-sharing arrangement. This effort resulted in the Arusha Accords, a far-reaching agreement to return Rwanda to peace and stability. Even after the accords were signed, Rwanda enjoyed an extraordinary political commitment. The international