

FROM PEACEKEEPING TO PEACEBUILDING

CANADA TAKES THE INITIATIVE

Both the creation of the United Nations and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s raised great hopes for a durable world peace. Although widespread conflicts have disappeared, they have unfortunately been replaced by a large number

of civil wars and regional conflicts. No fewer than 87 armed conflicts were identified in 1997, with every one of them except three located in

developing countries. All share the characteristics of long-term cycles of violence and the tendency to spread to neighbouring countries.

The huge human and financial costs of these conflicts have led the international community to re-examine the situation as a whole and to explore new and creative ways to deal with this recurring violence. Two key concepts have emerged from this process of reflection: human security and peacebuilding.

Canada, a pioneer in peacekeeping, was one of the first countries to promote the peacebuilding concept in 1996 when it launched the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative. Since peacebuilding is linked both to security and to development, the Initiative is a joint

program of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). There can be no development without peace, and there can be no peace without equitable economic and social development.

The Initiative has two components: the Canadian Peacebuilding Fund and the Canadian Peacebuilding Program. The purpose of the Fund, which is managed by CIDA, is to stimulate local peacebuilding initiatives. So far, about 40 projects have been completed or are in progress in Africa, Asia, Central America, the Middle East, Haiti and Bosnia. These projects cover activities such as instruction in peaceful conflict resolution techniques, collection and destruction of small arms, and education about the electoral

process. The Fund supports projects associated

with both conflict prevention and post-conflict social and economic reconstruction.

The Canadian Peacebuilding Program, which is managed by DFAIT, has three objectives: a) to identify and train Canadian men and women capable of participating in specific conflict prevention and peacebuilding projects; b) to reinforce multilateral peacebuilding mechanisms such as the regional and international organizations; and c) to support small projects that do not fit into official development assistance programs but may, for example, help to reconcile communities after the end of a conflict.

On September 25, 1998, Minister Axworthy presented to the United Nations General Assembly the first report on Canada's activities in this field, entitled *Peace in Progress - The Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative*, which earned Canada much praise for its leadership in this area.

Promotion of the peacebuilding concept and related activities will therefore be central to Canada's diplomatic agenda in 1999. As a result of its re-election to the United Nations

Security Council, Canada will be in a position to play a decisive role in encouraging the international community to become much more active in conflict prevention and durable peacebuilding. ●

For a copy of the report, or to learn more about the Initiative, please contact:

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