

by each of the international guests. Ms. Irene Aguillar, Program Officer for the Ombudsman and Human Rights Program of the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights (IIDH), began with a presentation on the evolution of and challenges facing national institutions in Latin America, focusing in particular on the creation and strengthening of ombudsman offices in a number of Central and South American countries. Ms. Anne Routier, Commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), followed with an examination of the challenges facing the SAHRC and other national institutions in Africa. Finally, Mr. Ravi Nair, Executive Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHRDC) and member of the Steering Committee for the Asia-Pacific Human Rights NGOs Facilitating Team, examined the strengths and weaknesses of national institutions in Asia. The presentations were followed by a group discussion to clarify issues which should be explored during the remainder of the meeting. A number of issues emerged from the discussion which became the basis for the sessions on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning, including:

- establishing criteria for Canadian engagement (both in terms of assessing a potential partner institution's credibility as well as the availability of appropriate Canadian resources and skills) and disengagement;
- relations civil society (in Canada and the country in question) in initiatives with national institutions;
- relations with government agencies;
- implementing recommendations and decisions;
- budgetary constraints;
- building the capacity of appointees and staff of national institutions;
- fulfilling their mandates in the area of human rights complaints, human rights education/promotion, alternative dispute resolution, and monitoring.

After the lunch break, Session 3, entitled *Existing Initiatives and Lessons Learned*, began with a presentation by Mr. John Hucker, Secretary General of the CHRC on the Experiences of the CHRC. Mr. Hamilton followed with a presentation of the results of a survey conducted by the CHRF of Canadian initiatives involving national institutions. The session was chaired by Mr. René Plaetevoet, Director of the CHRF's Asia Programme. The presentations provided a picture of the variety and breadth of Canadian involvement. Following a question period, the participants were divided into three groups to work with facilitators to explore these Canadian experiences and identify some lessons learned. Before the end of the day, each group reported back to the plenary and the Chair led a discussion of the lessons learned.

The second day of the roundtable began with a recap of the previous day's deliberations by Mr. Plaetevoet.

Session 4, entitled *Formulating Recommendations for Effective Action*, was chaired by Mr. Lafontaine. The participants were again divided into their groups from Session 3 and asked to consider four questions:

1. To what extent should support for national institutions become a priority for Canadian involvement in human rights promotion overseas?
2. What are the Canadian resources available?
3. How can we make the most effective use of these resources?