

Mr. Anderson concluded his presentation by stating that rather than try to change the system and return to doing everything under a UN flag, we should celebrate successes regardless of which organization leads the mission.

(There was no immediate discussion due to time constraints, but participants returned to the subject throughout the day.)

Discussion:

Much discussion focused on Canada's perceived role as an international peacekeeper. Several panelists noted that Canadians, particularly youth, identify with their country's role as a peacekeeper, as well as with its longstanding support of the UN. For many, the UN clearly remains the institution of preference. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of departmental and government support for the UN over the past four years.

However, one panelist countered that modern peacekeeping is largely misunderstood by the general public; that peacekeeping is now more than simply 'blue helmets'. It has become a complex, multifaceted process that involves much more than a military component. Hence, it was argued that more weight and credit should be given to the non-military organizations, such as development groups, for peacebuilding work. It was also felt that the Canadian public should be better educated as to the current development, peacebuilding and peacekeeping work being done by various government departments and non-governmental organizations.

This idea of educating the Canadian public was then linked to SHIRBRIG. One participant feared that the public was largely unaware of the SHIRBRIG and that the lead Departments had not provided sufficient information to mobilize support for the brigade. Because of its relatively obscure status, there was a concern that it remained a low priority within DFAIT and DND. Another suggested that Canada was now well placed to organize and sponsor a conference on the SHIRBRIG, particularly given the opportunity to influence a wider discussion on its future. This proposal was met with general approval. Several thought it might be an effective way to advance the Chair's agenda, as well as other Canadian priorities. However, this idea concerned two panelists who expressed a reluctance to overload the agenda with additional objectives.