

# Introduction

In the past decade, a shift has occurred in what it means to be secure. Today, the language of security extends beyond defending sovereignty and the rights of states. It encompasses freedom of expression and forced migration, internally displaced persons and war-affected children. This represents an important progression in the global lexicon.

Canada began using the language of human security when it became obvious that in the aftermath of the Cold War a new foreign policy paradigm was needed. Just from reading the newspaper or watching the evening news, it was apparent that in the new era the primary victims of conflict, if not the primary targets, were most often civilians. Clearly, the protection of individuals would have to be a major focus of our foreign policy.

The term "human security" was not, of course, our invention. It was first given prominence in the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report*. Nor is the concept really all that new. The idea that the protection of people is at least as important as the sovereignty of states has achieved increasing recognition as a principle of international relations since the end of the Second World War. International instruments such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols have all contributed to this momentum. Canada's contribution through its foreign policy has been to focus the concept of human security on protecting people from violence and to define an international agenda that follows from this objective.

Progress has been significant. In 1996, when Canada first outlined human security as "protection for civilians" at the UN General Assembly, the concept was little understood or accepted. Four years later, during Canada's April 2000 presidency of the Security Council, the language of human security was well established. As a result of Canada's initiative, the Security Council agenda has come to include issues such as protecting civilians in armed conflict, reforming sanctions regimes to reduce their humanitarian costs, defending the rights of women in places such as Afghanistan, and addressing the need to intervene on behalf of civilians to prevent a future Rwanda or Srebrenica.

Canada's human security agenda responds to new global realities. Its goal is to ensure that people can live in freedom from fear. This means building a world where universal humanitarian standards and the rule of law effectively protect all people; where those who violate these standards and laws are held accountable; and where our global, regional and bilateral institutions are equipped to defend and enforce these standards. As Canadians, we are committed to working with like-minded partners, at home and abroad, to build this world.

Vaclav Havel observed, "The sovereignty of the community, the region, the nation, the state... makes sense only if it is derived from the one genuine sovereignty — that is, from the sovereignty of the human being." In a similar vein, the concept of peace and security — national, regional and global — makes sense only if it is derived from individual security. This perspective informs Canadian foreign policy today. This is what we mean by human security.