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**CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE ON THE  
GUATEMALAN PEACE ACCORDS AND OPTIONS FOR CANADA  
ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

Frances Arbour  
Canada-Guatemala Round table Coordinating Committee

March 1997  
Ottawa, Ontario

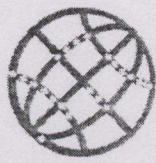
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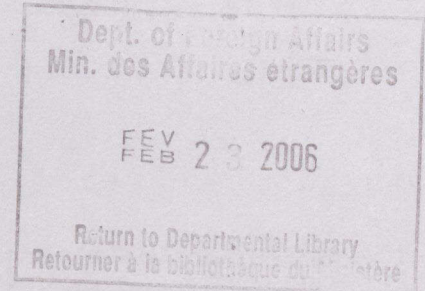








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# CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE

ON

# THE GUATEMALAN PEACE ACCORDS

AND

# OPTIONS FOR CANADA

Frances Arbour  
March 1997



## CANADA-GUATEMALA ROUNDTABLE

### Thanks

The author wishes to thank the John Holmes Fund of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development for its financial support for the process of organizing the Canada-Guatemala Roundtable and the publication of the event's report. The author is grateful to the staff of the CCFPD for its advice and encouragement.

The author also wishes to thank the Guatemalan participants in the Roundtable. She also wishes to thank Roger Plant, then director of the Indigenous Section of MINUGUA (UN Mission for Verification in Guatemala) and Deborah Barry, Economic geographer and social scientist, Director of PRISMA (The Salvadoran Program for Research on Development and the Environment) in San Salvador for their invaluable contributions.

The Canada-Guatemala Roundtable event was greatly enhanced by the contributions of the members of the **Coordinating Committee** - Tim Draimin, Robert Fox, Jose Garcia-Lozano, John Graham, Jessie Smith and Peggy Teagle. The **Coordinating Committee** is also grateful for the support of the note-taker - Margot Lange, Project Accompaniment and Larry Reid, Ottawa Central American Solidarity Committee.

### Author

Frances Arbour has over twenty years experience in international development, human rights and refugee advocacy as related particularly to Latin America and Canadian foreign Policy. She has lived and worked in Mexico and Central America and has extensive experience in programme design, monitoring and evaluation with a special focus on women in development, gender perspectives and indigenous issues. From 1978 to 1985, she worked as the executive director of the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America. From 1988 to 1993, she was the programme coordinator for Guatemala and Mexico for San Jose-based Project Counselling Service for Latin American Refugees, a consortium of European agencies and Inter-Pares. She is currently a self-employed consultant, researcher and writer.

### Special Assistant

Jessie Smith, a Master's candidate at the School for Political Economy, Carleton University, Thesis: "We are not Profitable" - Neoliberalism and the Peasant Sector in Nicaragua. Jessie was engaged in the planning and implementation of the Roundtable.



On December 29, 1996, a final peace agreement was signed between the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), bringing an end to 36 years of internal conflict. The final accord represents the best hope in decades for transforming Guatemalan society into a fuller democracy based on the rule of law and the broad participation of sectors historically excluded from economic and political decision-making. This is a critical moment of transition in which Guatemalan society, with the help of the international community, has an opportunity to consolidate the peace process by eliminating the sources of social conflict. It is an opportunity that may not come again.

The peace accords also afford a unique opportunity for the Canadian government, NGOs and other sectors of Canadian civil society to re-assess their respective policy options. To this end, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development sponsored a three month consultative process with a wide range of actors from Guatemalan civil society which culminated in a one-day Roundtable to define priorities and proposals for Canadian responses in the context of peace-building.

Representatives of Canadian and Guatemalan civil society organizations met in Ottawa on March 17. The Roundtable was designed to generate ideas which respond to the challenges of this transition period in Guatemala. The participants were representatives of Guatemalan and Canadian NGOs as well as a representative from the UN Verification Mission (MINUGUA) and a contributor to a UNDP-sponsored evaluation of the implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador.

The Roundtable focused on two of the peace accords - **Indigenous Identity and Rights and Resettlement of the Population Uprooted by the Armed Conflict** - chosen, after widespread consultation in Guatemala, because they provide the foundation for strengthening civil society in Guatemala and overcoming the exclusionary and discriminatory policies that have marked Guatemalan society for over 40 years.

## **I. A MOMENT FOR PEACE-BUILDING**

Guatemalan participants at the Roundtable reported that the peace accords have been greeted by the populace with happiness and a sense of relief that the war is finally over. There is a general recognition that new political spaces and opportunities for participation have been created.

The human cost of the conflict has not been forgotten, however, and, although the peace process has been well received, it has only barely begun to change the structures of power in Guatemala. **Of critical importance are the tasks of**



**demilitarizing the state and strengthening civil power and civil society in the transition to a fully democratic society.** While the size of the army has been reduced, the role it plays requires further re-definition. The Intelligence Office and the Presidential High Command are not yet under civilian control. Meanwhile, the issue of impunity must be addressed. Amnesty must not grant exemption from punishment for state actors who committed crimes against the people, nor preclude the possibility of knowing the historical truth regarding human rights violations. True reconciliation will only be possible on this basis.

At the same time, the peace accords do not deal with critical socio-economic issues. The accord in this area is weak and fails to resolve key land issues. Guatemala remains one of the most inequitable societies in the Americas. The root causes of social conflict must be addressed through concrete programs and efforts to combat racism, poverty, and social injustice.

The Roundtable also noted the importance of new social actors at this moment of Guatemalan history. The Mayan movement is diverse, increasingly active and a growing political factor. Municipal authorities, especially mayors, are taking on greater responsibilities especially as military barracks are closed. Women are increasingly active and, working from a gender perspective, have made significant proposals for government action.

## **II. PEACE-BUILDING AND MACRO-ECONOMIC POLICIES**

The Roundtable analyzed the implementation of earlier peace accords in El Salvador with the intent of identifying mistakes and limitations in that process which the Guatemalan process might avoid. In El Salvador there was an inherent contradiction between the implementation of peace accords and the simultaneous implementation of neoliberal macro-economic policies. The logic of neoliberal economics required the weakening of the state through reductions in government spending and the privatization of state entities. Thus, these policies undermined the peace process which required a strong state with the capacity to spend money on key social areas such as health, education, employment, popular housing, etc.

In Guatemala, the demilitarized state must be strong enough to implement the accords. At the moment this requires measures to strengthen rather than weaken the civil state in Guatemala. The macro-economic reform agenda must not be allowed to destabilize the peace process - rather it should be shaped by it.

In Guatemala, a tripolar tension exists between the state, civil society and market forces. The private sector is currently very energetic in advancing the cause of



neoliberal macro-economics. In this context, some private sector interests may, in fact, oppose or slow down the implementation of accords aimed at benefitting previously marginalized sectors of civil society. Guatemalans should be watchful for similar contradictions in the role and policies of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank especially as they affect land issues and the implementation of the peace accords.

The recognition of indigenous land rights could ultimately be undermined by the nullifying impact of market forces. Mexico is a case in point: many indigenous Mexicans, with little or no access to credit and other productive inputs, have been forced to sell land previously worked under communal ownership. The conversion of a social registry of land to an ownership registry is accelerating the privatization and the "globalization" of land ownership. Returning to the case of El Salvador, the private property rights of certain sectors have been attended to faster than accords which favoured marginalized sectors. These mistakes should not be replicated in Guatemala.

El Salvador's experience is also instructive regarding the importance of establishing the rule of law through a total reform of the judicial system including the establishment of a professional civilian police force was underlined. In El Salvador, instead of a democratization based on the rule of law there has been a "democratization of impunity" as everyone gets away with flouting the law. This has created a lack of confidence in the system and undermines prospects for long term peace.

### III. PEACE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The Roundtable explored the **key issues** in the accords on the **resettlement of the uprooted populations** and the **identity and rights of indigenous people**.

**III.1 The Uprooted Population Accord** encompasses people who are returned refugees, refugees, and internally displaced people, including the Popular Resistance Communities (CPRs), living in geographic areas which are the primary poverty zones in Guatemala. These people have lived in a permanent state of emergency. Their needs include physical resettlement, social and cultural reinsertion and economic productivity. However, NGOs and other civil society actors are now encountering some difficulty in the transition from dealing with humanitarian emergencies to addressing development issues. The international community can play an important role to strengthen the technical and administrative capacity of these actors.

The **Uprooted Population Accord** functions with a Technical Commission



established to analyze the needs of the displaced population and to formulate projects in response. The Technical Commission is composed of two representatives designated by the government, two representatives designated by the uprooted population (ACPD) and two representatives of international donors and cooperation agencies, these latter two as advisors. The Technical Commission serves as a space for developing consensus about a Global Resettlement Strategy and for guiding the implementation of the accord. Consultation and discussion has often been difficult but, after two years, the Technical Commission reached a consensus on a strategic resettlement plan which is outlined in the **Program for Peace: The opportunity for Guatemala**. Unfortunately, the Technical Commission has not received the support it merits as an important alternative model of participation for the affected parties and the international community.

The international community should insist that this mechanism, agreed upon by the parties, be used effectively to carry out the proposed resettlement strategy. To date, it's role has been downplayed by a government in which historical forces have found it difficult to make the transition to new forms of participation by affected sectors. As well, representatives of the international donors have not assumed their full responsibility to facilitate the effective functioning of the Commission. Basic infrastructure such as phone and fax lines and office equipment have not been adequately provided. Political support by the international community has also been lacking at critical moments. At the Consultative Group meeting in Brussels, the Guatemalan government included the Technical Commission's Programme for Peace: An Opportunity for Guatemala as appendix #3 within its global proposal. On this occasion, only one government specifically offered funding for the implementation of this accord.

The integration and participation of the uprooted population is an essential element in the peace process and critical for achieving long term reconciliation. The undermining of the mechanism to implement this accord will result in a loss of confidence in the peace process itself. The Technical Commission should be strengthened. Its experience may be useful in helping to inform other parity commissions to be established to implement the accord on the identity and rights of indigenous peoples.

**III.2 The Accord on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples** promotes fundamental change in Guatemalan society and characterizes the future Guatemala as a multiethnic, pluricultural and multilingual nation in which the identity and rights of indigenous peoples are to be fully recognized. Its implementation requires a transformation in attitudes of discrimination and practices of social and economic exclusion experienced by the vast majority of Guatemalans. The accord calls for the



participation and representation of indigenous people at all levels of Guatemalan society. It is the only accord that specifically includes a gender perspective recognizing the double, even triple, discrimination against indigenous women and it creates an organism for the defense of indigenous women.

Representatives of the Mayan movement at the Roundtable emphasized the dynamic nature of their cultural identity. They pointed out that Guatemalan indigenous sectors encompass as great a diversity of ideological perspectives as the rest of civil society. Myths and stereotypes must be broken down: not all indigenous people are peasants; many are urban people more interested in professional work or private sector business. Leaders of the Mayan movement reject policies - indigenistic or paternalistic - which continue to marginalize their full participation in the political, social, economic and intellectual life of their country. They are not seeking a form of indigenous self-government since the Maya are a majority in Guatemala and also have a presence in neighbouring countries. Many indigenous people want more than a piece of land and do not want to be relegated to traditional roles of providing cheap labour in the agricultural sector. The need to democratize Guatemalan society, including civil society, begins with support for indigenous organizations and institutions which support the Mayan people.

Within Mayan organizations, however, difficult issues such as indigenous identity and gender must be addressed. The Mayan cosmovision recognizes the complementarity of women and men but this doesn't remove the real inequality that exists between indigenous men and women. Women's participation in decision-making or policy development is still marginal even in many grass roots organizations. Proposals for the decentralization of the state and national entities will not work without women's active participation grounded in the day-to-day reality of women at the local level.

The Mayan people want to maintain their cultural values but some things have to change. Unequal gender roles in the family and in the wider indigenous community must be examined and transformed. Third parties, including the international community, can provide opportunities for discussion and can assist women to develop capacities to assume new roles within a Mayan movement now led primarily by male leaders. Some international cooperation agencies have already made a contribution to Mayan women by insisting that the projects and programmes they support include a gender perspective and that women take part in defining the priorities and strategies of project proposals.

Implementation of the accord on indigenous identity and rights cannot be separated from the rest of the peace process. Some achievements to date include the emergence of significant new actors such as the indigenous sectors, increased opportunities for social and political participation and the building of civil society



linkages at local, regional and national levels. Building and consolidating unity remain as challenges.

Mayan organizations are working closely with a number of government officials at the municipal level while avoiding errors from earlier periods to work **only** at the local level. Regional and national relationships are essential as well to constructing a new vision of the Guatemalan nation which is multiethnic, pluricultural and multilingual.

Other challenges include increasing the technical and professional capacity of indigenous people to develop proposals for greater political participation and for economic sustainability programmes. Participation of local community members in decisions which affect their lives must increase.

A representative from the United Nation's Verification Commission (MINUGUA) explained MINUGUA's role in monitoring and verification of the peace accords. MINUGUA's first assignment began in 1994 with the verification of the **Comprehensive Human Rights Accord**. Later, MINUGUA was assigned the monitoring and verification of the **Accord on Indigenous Identity and Rights**. In mid-April, it is expected that MINUGUA will be issued an expanded mandate to cover verification of all the accords.

The Coordination of Guatemalan Mayan Organizations (COPMAGUA) is currently the primary entity negotiating the implementation of the Indigenous Accord. But it is necessary to go beyond the accord - to the socio-economic accord and the accords dealing with demilitarization and demobilization - in order to encompass all the issues facing the indigenous sector. The indigenous accord is an exercise in nation-building in which the majority indigenous population is treated with respect and equity. Indigenous people must also have access to productive resources, including land, access to credit and to technical and administrative training in order to be economically productive.

Two options exist for creating a truly multicultural society in Guatemala: a) the establishment of completely separate Mayan institutions or b) the transformation of all of Guatemala's laws and institutions to take into account the Mayan cosmovision, perspectives and issues. Guatemalan indigenous people are excellent negotiators. These skills are essential for working through the process of nation building from a multicultural perspective.

#### IV. PEACE-BUILDING PRIORITIES:

As a meeting between Canadian and Guatemalan civil societies focusing on two of



the Guatemalan peace accords, this Roundtable has identified the following priorities for peace-building at this critical moment. These are the broad principles which should guide government and non-governmental actors in the design of programmes and policies:

### **1) ELIMINATING THE ROOT CAUSES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT**

If peace is to be long-lasting, the root causes of the conflict must be confronted. Indigenous rights, the demilitarization of the state, an end to impunity, transformation of the judicial system, and democratization through increased participation of civil society are among the key elements that must be addressed. Land tenure is a critical issue which must be resolved recognizing cultural and sustainability factors in addition to market criteria.



## **2) ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF A SUSTAINABLE PEACE**

The contradiction between the implementation of neoliberal economic policies alongside the peace-building project must be addressed. If not, serious social dislocation and internal conflict is bound to arise. There is a great risk that the economic agenda will take precedence over the peace process, especially if there is formulaic pressure from the International Financial Institutions. The macro-economic reform agenda must not de-stabilize the peace process but rather be shaped by it.

## **3) SOCIAL PARTICIPATION - NEW VOICES, NEW STRUCTURES**

The transformation of Guatemalan society must include sharing of both political and economic power with those who have traditionally been marginalized. Examples from post-colonial Africa attest to the need to ensure that economic power not be left in the hands of the elite. New and innovative mechanisms and support systems should facilitate effective and broad-based social participation in peace-building and in economic and social reconstruction. It is especially important that the international community insist on meaningful participation by women; a continuing insistence on the importance of a gender perspective is paramount.

Efforts should be made to strengthen local authorities and communities in the process of the decentralization and democratization of the Guatemalan state. Civil society must advocate for the transformation of the state into one that responds to people's needs. While NGOs have a role in these areas, given the vulnerability of their funding, they should not attempt to replace government roles, especially in areas like health and education.

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT**

Canada is already making useful contributions to the Guatemalan peace process with the deployment of two police officers with MINUGUA and the assignment of 15 peacekeepers to the multi-nation force to oversee the demobilizing of the URNG. New bilateral aid assistance is also in the pipeline.

It is imperative that Canada keep all of the Accords in mind -- not just certain ones. The Roundtable is concerned that the Arzu government may favour the Accords that its government signed, at the expense of those that previous governments negotiated. Continued international attention should be maintained on issues of security and human rights lest the international community overlook human rights



abuses in Guatemala with the signing of the Accords. Canada's refugee policy, and monitoring of human rights violations should not change simply because Peace Accords have been signed.

The Roundtable suggests the following recommendations to compliment and extend Canada's current important commitments.

1. Effective international monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the peace accords in general and of the two accords addressed by the Canada-Guatemala Roundtable are critical to ensure implementation. It is vitally important that the mechanisms established within each accord to guide their implementation and to provide for independent verification be respected and used in order to ensure compliance. The confidence-building required for building a lasting peace depends immensely on fidelity to these factors.
2. Peace conditionality is complex but must be considered. Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the Guatemalan government abides by the Accords. Through diplomatic channels the Canadian government can encourage the Guatemalan government to fulfil its obligations. If this is not enough, the Canadian government could install peace conditionality which would entail revoking a level of political or monetary support or other assistance. Here it is important to respect the integrity of non-governmental channels and not be caught in a situation where decisions to cut back on assistance to the government also affect civil society channels, as was the case a few years ago when Canada supported an OAS resolution regarding assistance to Haiti. Peace conditionality can also take place within the International Financial Institutions. Canada's representatives in these bodies should press for funds to be released only upon compliance with the Accords.
3. Since macro-economic policies could undermine the peace process, Canada should propose a "peace-building framework" for the economic policies of the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund in their programmes with Guatemala.
4. The role of the United Nations Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) is pivotal; it is crucial in assisting the Guatemalans to build the institutional capacity required to establish the rule of law and democratic institutions at all levels of society. Several other United Nations entities are also involved in monitoring and in supporting reconciliation and development. The U.N. entities should make every effort to coordinate their work, to speak with a unified voice regarding implementation and to make their assessments available in public reports. The Canadian government should insist that the U.N. actors have a



transparent coordination structure and regular public reporting mechanisms.

MINUGUA and other United Nations agencies come under pressure from sectors less wedded to the effective implementation of the accords. For this reason, the Canadian government through its Embassy in Guatemala and through other diplomatic channels should regularly express support for effective United Nations activity and indicate concern at the highest levels when the United Nations role is weakened in any way. The Canadian Embassy could take the lead in forming an informal diplomatic group which could use its "good offices" to increase the effectiveness of the monitoring and verification mechanisms.

6. The Canadian government, through its aid programme for Guatemala, should invest resources to support peasants to make the most productive use of available land. Special attention should be paid to these needs in the process of economic reintegration of the displaced and returnee population and the demobilized population.

7. The Roundtable recommends the establishment of a Government-NGO Peace-building Taskforce on Guatemala as an opportunity for the Canadian government and Canadian NGOs and civil society to support the strengthening of the Guatemalan state and Guatemalan civil society in a complementary fashion. This Taskforce would provide a useful mechanism for ongoing sharing, analysis and programme discussion. It should also explore ways to involve Guatemalan civil society partners.

8. The Canadian government should support the development of linkages between domestic NGOs in Canada (eg: NAPO) and their counterparts in Guatemala. These linkages would assist these counterparts to learn tools for becoming advocates with appropriate state and other entities for the needs of specific sectors.

9. Many Guatemalans are unaware of the contents of the Peace Accords. If people know about the contents of the Accords they can use them to defend their rights. Canada should consider providing resources to appropriate organizations so that they can educate the population about the Accords. Consideration should be given to printing the accords in indigenous languages.



## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANADIAN NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The following recommendations from the Roundtable are not without relevance to governmental entities. However, they are aimed at Canadian NGOs and other civil society actors as they re-evaluate their relationship to Guatemala in the context of the peace process. Some of these recommendations contain specific programming proposals while others are more general comments on issues of the Canada-Guatemala civil society relationships.

1. Canadians could help Guatemalan civil society monitor the implementation of the peace process. This is important and must be done in such a way that people at the local community level are given a voice. However, since many Guatemalan organizations now find themselves already over-burdened at this stage of peace implementation, many groups would find it difficult to add yet another component to their work. Canadians can help to fill in these spaces. The work done through Volver (a third party monitoring mechanism from the Refugee Return process) could be a useful example in this regard.
2. Canadian NGOs, with government support, can facilitate capacity building. Many new actors who have made their way to the bargaining table need to strengthen their technical ability to work in these new spaces. Canadians could help facilitate training in: negotiating conflict, mediation skills, transition from vertical to horizontal perspectives, methods to include all voices in society, ways and means to assure civil society analysis and proposals, and access to communication systems especially to link people in isolated areas to major centers.
3. Technical and financial support for information and communication technologies (ICT) would greatly facilitate the coordination of civil society actors and increase social participation. In follow-up conversations Guatemalan participants at the Roundtable indicated that there is a need for training in the use of technologies such as the Internet. As a starting point, e-mail would enable actors across the country to communicate and coordinate, saving both time and money. In addition, Web Sites could help disseminate information, and be used for the peace monitoring process both in Guatemala and in the international community. While basic ICT resources are already in place in larger centres in Guatemala, resources are especially needed in smaller and rural centres.
4. International organizations can offer their "good offices" to facilitate the processes of dialogue and negotiation. Canadians should go beyond mere technical support issues and be willing to **accompany** Guatemalans through these difficult processes. As some groups within Guatemalan civil society have not as yet had the time nor the space to confront their internal contradictions regarding, for example the role of



women, now is the time international actors can facilitate a social dialogue that addresses difficult issues between and within different groups. International actors can also assist in the creation of new alliances and new institutions required for the strengthening of civil society.

5. The Roundtable recommends that the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC) through its participation in the United Nations' War Torn Societies Project on Guatemala, request, in the project's work on the key issue of "social and economic development," that the WSP prepare an analysis of land issues and alternatives for land reform in Guatemala so as to develop specific proposals for land tenure and productive land use for implementation under the Accord on Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation. The Project should also be encouraged to develop alternative macro-economic policies which are in harmony with peace implementation for consideration by the Guatemalan government.

6. Canadians should note that municipal and regional level political participation are a high priority for Guatemalan civil society. The reconstruction of the social fabric through the empowerment of local authorities and local communities will do much to support the welcome proposals for the decentralization and democratization of political participation. Important steps have already been taken in some regions which have led to the strengthening of local and regional coordinations which often include local authorities, grassroots organizations (Mayas, women, youth, unions etc), NGOs and other entities. Material and technical resources are required to deepen and consolidate these positive, but mostly incipient, experiences. A number of Guatemalan NGOs and grass roots organizations have indicated the need for adequate resources to be able to hire professionally competent staff.

7. There is an opportunity to further the link between the peace building network in Canada and other actors in the NGO community. The peace building concepts raised in the Roundtable were new and very useful for many of the participants, both Guatemalan and Canadian. At the same time, the peace building network could also learn from the accumulated experience the NGO community has acquired from working in Guatemala. Opportunities to pursue avenues for collaborative and mutual support should be pursued. The **Peace-Building Fund** is a new space which may allow for the development of creative pilot projects in Guatemala.

8. Similarly, it would be useful to amplify the relations and linkages between indigenous people in Canada and Guatemala. It is important to note the similarities between the struggles of indigenous people in Guatemala and Canada. These communities would likely learn much from one and other, such as strategies for dealing with the state, especially concerning issues of land claims, educational reform and autonomy.



9. There is a need to increase the level of serious academic and non-academic studies on issues concerning the peace process and the transformation of the nation. This would include systematic opportunities for reflection and analysis - something that many groups simply have not had the time to engage - and could include opportunities for cross-national analysis. Again, IDRC could request that the War-Torn Societies Guatemala project provide forums for reflection and analysis on themes relevant to Guatemalan civil society.

10. Organizations go through great changes at the start of a process like the transition to peace. It is a period of experimentation with new leaders and new structures. At times it is impossible to provide detailed proposals for future work because of the changing nature of the situation and the arrival of new actors. Funding for the project development stage is often essential in this period.

11. Roundtable participants noted that donor agencies need to be more flexible in their prerequisites during the transition period. It is important that the donor community not overwhelm national NGOs with competing, diverse demands. Coordination of international efforts should be an objective where possible. It is useful to have a realistic appraisal of local technical, administrative and organizational capacities. Donors' administrative requirements should take into account the current capacity of the NGOs in question and work with them to increase their administrative and technical capacity for effective project management. Contributions to the professionalization of NGOs trusted by the population is an important support to long term sustainable development.

12. Finally, it is important to remember that there is often a disjuncture between the expenditure curve and the learning curve of actors within civil society. Most funds are disbursed soon after an agreement is signed, when local communities and many NGOs are least able to articulate a coherent set of priorities, and organizations are least able to deploy resources effectively. This reflects the need for a longer term commitment as important new actors will be better able to administer funds in the future than they are soon after the signing of the peace.

As the Roundtable discussion drew to a close, the participants were reminded that cessation of hostilities and demobilization were significant first steps in what would be a longer term process to break with an inequitable and racist history. It is equally important that the Guatemalan people continue to articulate and implement a clear social vision based on the premises of the peace accords and inclusive of all its citizens.



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(This document has been translated into Spanish for use in Guatemala.)











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# News Release

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January 28, 1997 No. 10

## CANADA TO SEND MILITARY OBSERVERS TO GUATEMALA

Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy and Minister of National Defence Douglas Young today announced that Canada will deploy up to 15 military observers to a United Nations mission in Guatemala. The three-month mission was authorized by the UN Security Council on January 20, with a mandate to support the verification of the Guatemalan Peace Accords that were signed in Guatemala City on December 29, bringing to an end 35 years of civil conflict.

"We hope that the parties to the conflict will be committed to co-operating fully with the verification of the cease-fire and the other steps that will be necessary to further the peace process," said Mr. Axworthy. "Canada not only supports but is ready to assist Guatemala in the peacebuilding process with the deployment of Canadian military observers, as part of the overall United Nations effort. Canada's participation is an important step in this process."

Fifteen Spanish-speaking Canadian Forces personnel will participate in the mission. They will verify the cease-fire, the separation of combatant forces, and the disarming and demobilization of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) forces.

"Once again, Canadians are responding to a call from the international community to contribute to a more stable and secure world," said Minister Young. "The expertise of the Canadian Forces observers will ensure that our contribution brings a tangible benefit to the people of Guatemala."

The Canadian observers will be part of a 155-person military component that will be attached to the existing United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). Canadian personnel will be employed both within the mission headquarters and at the eight disarmament centres set up throughout the country.



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*Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade*

# News Release

www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca

April 27, 1998 No. 100

## CANADA CONDEMNS THE MURDER OF GUATEMALAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST BISHOP JUAN GERARDI

Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy today strongly condemned the murder last night of Bishop Juan Gerardi,

Co-ordinator of the Human Rights Office of the Archiepiscopate of Guatemala. Bishop Gerardi was an active campaigner for human rights and had played an important part in Guatemala's peace process.

"It is particularly distressing that this brutal crime comes only two days after the release of the Church's report on the human rights violations and atrocities during Guatemala's 36-year civil conflict," said Minister Axworthy. "Canada calls on the Government of Guatemala to undertake a vigorous and rapid investigation of this crime and to bring the perpetrators to justice."

"We express our sympathy and condolences to Bishop Gerardi's family and co-workers," added Minister Axworthy. "Canada will continue to support human rights workers and organizations in Guatemala."

Canada, through its peacebuilding fund and its bilateral aid program, supports implementation of the peace accords and peacebuilding in Guatemala. This includes five civilian police human rights monitors for the United Nations Mission, support to Guatemala's "Truth Commission," alternative conflict resolution, and community reconciliation through socio-economic reactivation projects in ex-conflict zones.

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<sup>1</sup> Visit [www.cfp-pec.gc.ca](http://www.cfp-pec.gc.ca) for more reports and other publications.



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