

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION FORUM.

MINUTES.

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Topic: *Sweden's Role in Conflict Prevention.*

Speaker: Ambassador Jan Eliasson

Ambassador Eliasson began his career in the conflict resolution field as the UN Under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs - a secretariat that sprung from the idea that solidarity does not stop at the border, but extends to all people in need. During his time in that post, he worked on such issues as land mines and displaced persons, and in such conflict zones as Somalia, Mozambique, and Angola. By the time he left the UN his major interest was in conflict prevention.

There are many problems associated with conflict resolution and prevention including the lack of public attention, referred to as the "CNN" factor. There is also the problem of accessing the communities in conflict. Ambassador Eliasson told the story of an aid plane that was shot down in 1993 as it flew to a crisis. The pilots were killed by land mines when they tried to leave the plane.

There is also the problem that successes are hard to point out since success means a disaster was averted, which is hard to prove. Even so, Ambassador Eliasson spoke of one example which he felt was a successful operation. Between 1989 and 1992, Africa was threatened by a terrible drought. \$700 million dollars for aid was assembled in 6 months, there was practically no corruption, and food and water-drilling equipment were provided. The damage to the social systems which could have occurred (food riots, coups, etc) was avoided.

Ambassador Eliasson then went into reasons why more organizations do not focus on prevention. He mentioned a quote by T.S Eliot: "Between the emotion and the response falls the shadow". Humans do not act decisively unless there is a visible crisis, and they must then get past the emotion of "something should be done" to actually doing something. In that lag, action may be lost entirely.

There is also our conception of interference in internal affairs. Sometimes actions as small as recognizing that there is a developing problem within a country, or trying to bring that problem to the attention of the leaders, can be considered interference. There is a common perception that it is generally not acceptable to intervene in a conflict until it has erupted full-scale, wreaking visible destruction of life and resources.

Also, sometimes it is difficult to get good information regarding early warning signs of conflict. Ambassador Eliasson commented that his relationships with NGOs were invaluable because they sometimes provided better warnings than his own organization at the UN.

Ambassador Eliasson proposed the idea that "prevention" is not one activity, but many, and can be broken down into a "ladder" of increasingly emphatic rungs or steps. The first step is bringing early

awareness to bear on the situation. A country's rulers are concerned with negative international attention, so media attention can be brought to bear. This is also the stage at which a thorough analysis and knowledge of the problem should be developed.

Step two is fact-finding missions. These missions will not only flesh out the knowledge of the situation, but they can be a catalyst or rationalization for action. They can also provide space for the process of saving face.

The third step of the ladder is outlined in Chapter 6 and Article 33 of UN charter. These sections list several measures that can be tried before resorting to the use of force. These are: arbitration, mediation, negotiation, use of regional mechanisms, and judicial inquiry.

The fourth step is peace-keeping operations. The recommended action is preventive development, such as the UNPREDEP in Macedonia. Civilian efforts are also an option at this level.

Step five is the use of sanctions, but in a sharp and precise manner. They must be specific, targeted sanctions. Efforts must be simultaneously made to keep the leaders from demonizing the countries leveling the sanctions.

Step six is the credible threat of the use of force.

While outlining these steps, Ambassador Eliasson stressed that prevention must not be seen as a vague idea, but as a practical solution. Practitioners should offer concrete courses of action with concrete potential results.

Ambassador Eliasson pointed out that, since Sweden currently holds the presidency of the EU, it has the authority to define the EU's agenda. Part of Sweden's agenda is a commitment towards conflict resolution. He said that Sweden would like for each peace-keeping or military intervention to have a UN mandate. He cited the need for providing a civilian infrastructure, such as police and judges, as well as a military presence. He also pointed out that early intervention resulted in a lesser cost in material and fatalities.

Finally, Ambassador Eliasson outlined Sweden's vision for the EU. The first point was the enlargement of the EU to make war impossible between east and west. He also said there needed to be other definitions of strength besides military might. A nation might be strong in the sense of being economically stable, having social cohesion, environmental balance, and high, or quality of democracy. A function of strength will be the standard of life for a country's citizens, which will also improve its standing internationally.