

January 22, 2008
Attention: Assignment editor

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

No Exit Strategy for Canada without Negotiations

Group of 78, the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee, and the World Federalist Movement - Canada respond to Manley Panel Report

OTTAWA, ON—Canadian peacebuilding organizations are calling on the Government of Canada to recognize that the insurgency in Afghanistan cannot be solved militarily. The Group of 78, WFM – Canada and CPCC suggest that Canada needs to shift the focus of its efforts to the facilitation of Afghan-led political negotiations and reconciliation. This strong recommendation comes in response to the report released today by the Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan.

The above-mentioned NGOs welcome the report's reference to the importance of national reconciliation. However, Ernie Regehr, co-founder of Project Ploughshares, notes that "The report's concept of reconciliation is based on the model of amnesty, rather than a comprehensive process to address fundamentally conflicting interests."

"In the description of the Taliban the authors of the report acknowledge that the current fight is a continuation of the old civil war, and they say reconciliation must be 'eventually' achieved – yet how to encourage and support a peace process is not elaborated on and no innovative recommendations for the way forward are made," says David Lord, Director of CPCC.

Peggy Mason, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, speaking on behalf of the Group of 78, emphasizes that "The report does call for a more assertive Canadian diplomacy, but only with the intention of increasing the effectiveness of current counter-insurgency and reconstruction efforts." Says Mason, "What is urgently needed is a concerted initiative to mobilize a comprehensive peace process. This process must be led by Afghans themselves, but with international partners like Canada playing a supporting role.

WFM – Canada President Warren Allmand notes that the Panel's call for a high-level civilian representative of the UN is welcomed. "However," Allmand notes that "he or she should be tasked with more than ensuring civilian – military coherence. The UN is best suited to galvanize international support for a truly inclusive peace process."

Failure to elaborate on this fundamental challenge of a political solution jeopardizes the relevance of the entire document.

In addition, the NGOs stressed that key regional actors including Iran and Pakistan must be brought into this dialogue. Empty exhortations for the increasingly troubled Pakistani government to address insecurity within its borders must be replaced with international support for processes that address the deep democratic deficit that is at the root of Pakistan's insecurity.

Now is the time for Canadian parliamentarians to have a comprehensive debate on Afghanistan prior to the April NATO Summit so that Canada can bring to the table innovative new ideas for a winning strategy for Afghanistan and the region.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Peggy Mason
Group of 78
Tel.: 613.832.9322
Email: peggymason@bellnet.ca

Ernie Regehr
Tel.: 519.591.4421
Email: eregehr@ploughshares.ca

David Lord
Director, CPCC
Tel.: 613.241.3446
Email: david@peacebuild.ca

Warren Allmand
National President, World Federalist Movement – Canada
Tel.: 514.486.1811
Email: wallmand@canada.com

Manley Panel: Heavy on Combat, Light on Diplomacy, Development and Peace-Building

For Immediate Release – 22 Jan. '08

Ottawa – “The Manley report says many of the right things, but its recommendations are potentially a recipe for more, not less, insecurity for Afghans”, says Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), a coalition of almost 100 Canadian NGOs.

Barr says the Panel’s call for increased attention to diplomacy, development and governance, and a greater effort at training the Afghan army and police, is welcome. But too much of the report is devoted to beefing up the international military presence – as if the conflict in Afghanistan could be resolved militarily.

“We know that is unlikely,” says Barr. “So, if we are truly concerned about the lives and safety of our men and women in uniform, then we have to invest much more heavily in bringing the conflict to an end.”

The conflict, he says, has roots in history, in regional geopolitics, superpower politics, and in legitimate grievances over the sharing of resources and political power in Afghanistan. Peace efforts must take this into account.

“Peace-building has to address these causes at the community and political level, and not by investing ever more in the combat mission,” says Barr. “A peace process aimed at reconciliation and creating and building trust in institutions of governance, justice and human rights is the key to security for Afghans, and for our troops.”

In this respect, Barr says that the Panel’s emphasis on diplomacy largely refers to diplomacy around the military mission, rather than diplomacy in the cause of peace in Afghanistan and the region.

Barr also says he is disappointed the Panel didn’t address the consequences of military delivery of aid for strategic purposes.

“Canadian NGOs on the ground in Afghanistan have emphasized, again and again, that this practice turns both aid workers and Afghans into war targets and often has no long term security or development benefit,” Barr says.

Barr would like Parliament to move beyond the limitations of the Manley report to deepen the debate.

“Peace, development and real security for Afghans, need to be the watchwords of our mission. That’s the sort of commitment Canadians can get behind. It is also the recipe for bringing our troops home as soon as possible.”

For more information:

Peter Puxley
Media Relations
CCIC – CCCI
Tel: (613) 241-7007 ext. 311
ppuxley@ccic.ca