Fragile and Failed States E-Discussion Results

The debate up to now has been informed, thoughtful and constructive. Below are some key points of agreement and disagreement:

Participants have agreed on:

The need for Canada to contribute to the prevention of state failure, to intervene in failed and fragile states and to do so within in a multilateral framework

Canada's role as a peacekeeper, international arbiter, and influential diplomatic actor

The importance of prioritizing aid and being selective about which states we assist, given limited resources

Participants disagreed on:

Criteria for engagement: Participants disagreed on whether Canada should favour engagement in states with which it has a cultural, historic, linguistic etc. affinity. In addition, some argued that engagement should be based on conditions within the failing state, whereas others felt this should be guided primarily by Canadian national interests.

Democracy vs. Stability: Participants debated whether, when intervening in failed and failing states, Canada should aim to institute democracy immediately, ensure stability in order to bring about democracy, or promote stability as the sole end to avoid the transfer of liberal, democratic values.

Democracy – western particularity vs. universal right: Participants disagreed on whether promoting democracy involves imposing particular western values or empowers locals to shape their political system, while securing universal values such as human rights.

In light of the lively debate that has already occurred around these important subjects, the Moderator would like to encourage participants to examine the following issues more closely:

Failed and Fragile Cities?
Many of the challenges associated with failed and fragile states can be traced to major urban centres. For example, stabilization efforts in cities are complicated by high population densities, the high risk of civilian casualties, damage to critical infrastructure and the potential for the spread of disease. Do urban and rural areas differ in the human security challenges they present? If yes, how can existing mechanisms for conflict prevention, stability operations and peacebuilding be adapted to address particular issues associated with failed and fragile cities?

Response criteria? Canada does not have the capacity or resources to respond to every crisis or request. Under what conditions should we not assist a failed or fragile state?