



- d) in the area of human rights, Canada distinguished itself very early in its history as a precursor and defender. For example, Canadian government representatives played a primary role in the process of developing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, Canada assumed the co-presidency of the World Summit for Children held in New York on September 29 and 30, 1990;
- e) one of the Summit's objectives related to universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This text set out guarantees applicable to all aspects of civil and political rights, as well as the economic, social and cultural rights of children, thus adding a new dimension to discussions on youth and childhood. With 188 signatory countries, the Convention remains the international treaty with the most support among the international community;
- f) a Committee on the Rights of the Child, consisting of 10 international experts elected by the state parties, was established to review progress achieved by the states in carrying out their obligations;
- g) other specialized institutions also support the Committee in order to promote effective application of the Convention. For example, UNICEF publishes reports on changes in the socio-economic conditions of children in most of the world's countries. Documents such as *The State of the World's Children and Progress of Nations* allow assessment of progress in areas such as health, education, civil and political rights, and so forth;
- h) in Canada, the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children promotes the Convention to the Canadian public, government organizations and all sectors working with children. The Coalition, which was set up by United Nations agencies and NGOs, now includes about 50 national and international organizations and associations that continue to promote children's rights and assess Canada's progress in relation to the Convention;
- i) In his address to the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Human Development of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy made a firm commitment to promoting and preserving children's rights. This purpose is clear in the appointment of a special advisor on children's rights and the definition of priority focusses for government policies in this area. Canada will concentrate its efforts on (1) child labour; (2) child prostitution and sex tourism; and (3) children and armed conflict.

2. Summary of discussions

Following Ms. Meilleur's presentation, participants were invited by the facilitator, Alain Bissonnette, to make recommendations to improve cooperation and coordination among the Canadian players involved in this issue. We summarize below the various suggestions made by those who participated in the discussion.

A number of participants initially expressed doubts concerning the actions of the present government, which is establishing new consultation platforms while cutting the resources of those that already exist. In such a context, the National Forum on Canada's International Relations was more in the nature of a paradox than a skilfully orchestrated rationalization.

In view of the complexity and scope of the issue of international protection of children, the