

UNCLASSIFIED

HAITI - HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBJECT

In 1990, Haiti continued to attract the attention of agencies involved in the area of human rights. In accordance with the adoption of resolution 1990/56 of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, the 47th session will examine the report on this subject prepared by an independent expert.

BACKGROUND

Since the coming to power in March 1990 of a transitional government headed by civilians, the human rights situation seems to have taken a positive turn. This change is characterized by the fact that violence is no longer attributable to deliberate and systematic acts by the government. The freedom of opinion introduced since the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier continues to exist. Groups defending and promoting human rights operate freely. The provisional government's commitment to work to organize democratic elections seems about to bear fruit, since the first free general elections are to take place on December 16. It must be borne in mind, however, that these changes are not secure from slippage, as happened in 1987-1988.

Although most Haitians seem to place great hope in these elections, it must be admitted that no one can predict the actual impact they will have on the most basic human rights. Most of the population remains deprived of these rights. Without outside economic assistance, no Haitian government whatsoever will be able to work to implement basic rights.

CANADA'S POSITION

After a series of flagrant human rights violations in Haiti, the Canadian government announced in September 1988, that it was unilaterally suspending intergovernmental discussions on the planning of future bilateral projects. This decision in no way affected the poorest groups of Haitians, who continued to receive Canadian assistance through multilateral and non-governmental organizations. Since any decision to lift this suspension is linked to the evolution of the democratic process and to the achievement of tangible progress in the area of human rights, the Canadian government is carefully following political developments in Haiti in order to evaluate the situation.

The Canadian government is aware of the impact that respect for basic human rights can have on the future development of Haiti. It remains sympathetic to requests for assistance from organizations dedicated to the defence of these rights in that country.

While continuing to be concerned about the human rights situation in Haiti, Canada has noted some willingness on the part of the civilian and