

## **6. More Active Group of 78 Role**

Members concluded that the Group of 78, in order to play a more active role in supporting human rights, should be invited to participate in the annual consultations of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade on human rights.

Members were impressed by the view of the conference's keynote speaker, Warren Allmand, president of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Montreal, that public discussion of international affairs had fallen to an extremely low level, as evidenced by neglect of international issues in the last federal election campaign. Recalling that one of the original purposes of the Group of 78 was to stimulate public discussion of international issues vital to Canada, the meeting adopted the following resolution:

The Group of 78 should explore ways and means to promote public discussion of foreign policy issues in the period leading up to the next federal election. These efforts might include collaboration with the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.

## **Discussion groups: Constructive Engagement or Confrontation?**

The conference also approved many views and proposals received in reports to the general meeting from discussion groups of a dozen or so members each, led by experts in each field. Under the general heading of "Constructive engagement or confrontation", the groups considered the human rights situation in China and Burma, Cuba, Nigeria, and Bosnia.

### **1. Should China and Burma be Treated Similarly?**

There is a clear distinction to be drawn between China, where there is a gleam of hope for human rights, and Burma, which remains under arbitrary military rule. China has been increasing economic opportunities for its people and moving toward more responsible, law-based government, which gives the regime a certain legitimacy with the people. In Burma the regime impoverishes the people, drawing financial support from the drug trade and foreign investment.

The Group of 78 strongly supports the UN program for controlling the global traffic in narcotic drugs, as reaffirmed by the Special Session of the General Assembly in June 1998. In particular it supports the UN undertaking to stem the flow of drugs from Burma. The Group approves the Canadian economic sanctions against Burma; Canada should continue to press other countries, particularly ASEAN countries, to enact sanctions against Burma. On the other hand there should be no trade sanctions against China, though some members urged no sale of Canadian nuclear reactors to China.

### **2. Promotion of a Democratic Cuba**

The conference adopted the following resolution:

(1) The Group of 78 supports the general thrust of Canadian policy toward Cuba, including trade, investment, tourism and modest development initiatives, in particular exchanges that bring Cubans to Canada and send Canadian experts to Cuba, such as the program of graduate studies at the University of Havana sponsored by Carleton University.