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Statement by Dr. John Stewart, M.P.,  
Acting Chairman of the Canadian Delegation,  
in the Plenary Session of the General Assembly,  
December 5, 1963.

...Canada has a deep and continuing interest in the work which has been done and is being done to further the cause of human rights throughout the world. This interest has been heightened by our membership on the Human Rights Commission; and we attach very great importance to its work. For this reason, I should like to explain why Canada voted against the resolution which has just been adopted by this Assembly.

The United Nations, in dealing with the many problems which require its attention, must operate within the limits of the resources of people, time and money at its disposal. In order to do this, this organization must establish effective priorities and abide by them. Failure to do this will only reduce the effectiveness and productivity of our efforts. The General Assembly decided to give priority in 1964 to the World Conference on Trade and Development. This conference will greatly increase the tasks of the already overburdened Secretariat in preparing the massive documentation required. Moreover, the provision of staff for conferences has become a crucial problem. Consequently, the Secretary-General considered that the number of meetings in 1964 should be kept to a minimum.

The Conference on Trade and Development will require the conference facilities available in Geneva for an extended period of time. Additional problems have been presented by the proposed alterations at headquarters here, which will reduce considerably the facilities available for meetings and place an increased load on those in Geneva. For these reasons the Secretary-General asked whether the Functional Commissions might not cancel their meetings in 1964. The Economic and Social Council took into account the views of the Secretary-General and adopted a calendar of conferences for 1964, which did not include a meeting of the Human Rights Commission.

Canada has consistently supported the Secretary-General in his attempt to reduce the number of meetings in 1964, and we have endorsed the calendar of conferences which the Economic and Social Council adopted. We do not consider that the situation which caused the Secretary-General to make his appeal has changed. In fact, when the Third Committee was considering this issue, the Secretary-General, in Document A/C.3/L.1144, reiterated his hope that the calendar of conferences approved by the Economic and Social Council would be maintained.

We understand the desire of some delegations to have a draft convention on racial discrimination ready for consideration by the nineteenth session of this Assembly. In order to have this convention prepared, the Economic and Social Council has now been asked to reverse its decision regarding a 1964 meeting of the Human Rights Commission. In our view, this decision was taken without paying sufficient regard to the broader considerations which led the Secretary-General to make his proposal and the Economic and Social Council to approve it. We believe that the inevitable consequences will be to affect adversely the operations of the United Nations in other areas, which are equally important to the needs and aspirations of all of us, but particularly of the less-developed countries. It is for these reasons...that we have voted against this resolution.