

Other investigations hold promise of progress. We are pleased to note the investigation now under way by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission into the situation in Argentina. We also welcome the investigation by respected African jurists into the recent tragic events in the Central African Empire. In addition, the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Lusaka this summer agreed to consider the setting up of a human rights commission within the Commonwealth. There has been modest progress within the United Nations Human Rights Commission itself. I refer to the appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate the situation in Equatorial Guinea, and the Commission's contacts with certain governments as a result of its in camera debates. All this is gratifying progress indeed. But much more is yet to be done.

The United Nations must find better, more certain ways to deal with gross violations of human rights, no matter where they happen. We must be able to take effective action immediately, not years after the abuses begin. That is why Canada has long supported the proposal to establish the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights. This proposal, which would effectively set in place an international human rights ombudsman, has been explored over the years, but as yet not enough member states have found the courage to proceed with such an office.

Let me propose an alternative, then. This session of the General Assembly should agree to establish a position of Under-Secretary General for Human Rights, and we should appoint an individual of undisputed stature in the international community to that office. This person would use the mandate the Secretary General has under the Charter to use his good offices in the human rights field. With this, we would have an instrument through which the United Nations could fulfil this fundamental responsibility given to it by the people of the world.

Another step that could easily be taken is to devise a way of ending the distressingly large numbers of disappearances of individuals in many parts of the world. We urge that the Human Rights Commission be instructed to set up a committee of experts to investigate these unexplained vanishings.

We must not take the progress that has been made as an indication that our job is done. Outrages still exist. Some are longstanding, like apartheid and the situations in Namibia and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Others, such as political executions, arise from time to time in various parts of the world. We must find new ways of combating these violations, for world opinion demands it. Unless we can respond, our credibility, our relevance, our usefulness and very existence are in peril.

But our response must be both responsible and timely. The progress being made at this very moment in regard to Namibia, and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, for example, deserves our encouragement and support. It would be irresponsible to preempt the satisfactory solution of these problems by precipitate and distracting debate in this, or any other forum.