

Linking the Domestic and the International: Human Rights into the 21st Century  
October 2-4, 1998, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

Summary of Key Recommendations

On October 2-4, 1998, the University of Toronto Faculty of Law held a three-day conference marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 10th anniversary of the law school's International Human Rights Programme. The conference attracted 175 human rights scholars, academics, activists and governmental/United Nations representatives, under the theme of *Linking the Domestic and the International: Human Rights into the 21st Century*. Much of the discussion focused on Canada's role in the creation, promotion and implementation of international human rights law. The attached Final Report outlines in detail the foreign policy recommendations arising from each plenary and panel discussion, a brief summary of which follows:

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- The government's present focus on human security is pro-active and forward-looking, as preventing human rights abuses is the best way to prevent conflict. Canada should continue its leadership role on humanitarian law issues, such as the International Criminal Court. It should support measures and emergency measures and emergency support means of seeking justice and building a lasting peace in post-conflict societies, which requires a nuanced, multifaceted response such as facilitating the return of refugees, providing an economy, providing technical expertise for domestic prosecutions or with amercement commissions. Dialogue, education and training about rights are key to reconstructing a war-torn society. Canada should support such initiatives wherever it provides a substantial country with financial or other assistance packages.
- Canada must continue to think broadly about human rights - for example, how can the laws of war further incorporate the rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women? It is important that Canada recognizes the impact that non-human rights organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund can have on human rights implementation. In addition, Canada should take a leadership role in encouraging the cooperative integration of the different United Nations and regional human rights bodies. The Department of Foreign Affairs has already taken the first step in this by sponsoring the publication of *On the Record*. As well, Canada should support research into the possibility of expanding non-judicial institutions, such as ombudspersons, to provide a viable avenue of complaint at the international or regional levels about particular human rights violations. Canada should continue to promote provision of human rights information on the internet, as well as widespread internet access.
- Trade, development and labour standards are inexorably linked. For Canada's foreign policy of "constructive engagement" to work, it must actively promote reporting on human rights, selectively purchase from companies concerned with human rights and labour standards, ensure that the benefits from trade missions are dependent on human rights observance, and actively pursue the link between free trade, labour standards and human rights.
- Nongovernmental organizations and other citizens promoting human rights and human security. Canada should continue to work with civil society on these issues, particularly with respect to the promotion of human rights.
- Many countries agree to ratify treaties because they are... Canada should therefore focus on implementation and effective enforcement of existing treaties when it is examining human rights situations in other countries. It should also continue to examine international law dealing with emerging issues, for example, cloning, genetic engineering, and genetic technologies.

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