

The Commission approved the appointment of Special Rapporteurs for Iran and Afghanistan, which should improve its ability to consider the unsatisfactory state of human rights in those two countries.

Consideration on Poland was deferred until the next session, but this at least will ensure that the situation there may be debated at that time.

In all, it was a very busy session, and one in which Canada was able to accomplish a considerable amount.

Looking back now over the past nine years, I think that Canada can be proud of what it has been able to contribute to advancing human rights through the work of the Commission. Much of our contribution has been in a multitude of small efforts to improve the operation of some procedure or to make some resolution a little less political and more constructive in keeping with our general belief that these matters are best pursued in a moderate, balanced and constructive fashion, with a force that draws its strength from basic humanitarian conviction rather than from political ideology. It is this fundamental concentration on human rights, by and for themselves, which has marked our contribution to the Commission, and which has made Canada a credible and productive member of the Commission.

One of the main ideas Canada has promoted in these nine years is the thematic approach to human rights violations, an approach which deals with particular types of violation on a global basis, examining the general circumstances under which violations occur, as well as the particular ways they have developed in the various countries concerned. This approach, with its initial focus on the sin rather than the sinner, has undoubtedly led to a more reasonable and comprehensive examination of such difficult matters as "summary executions" and "disappearances" that would have been possible if cases had to be raised separately with regard to particular states.

Examination of "summary executions" and "disappearances" on a global basis now continues from year to year, and the processes developed from their examination are gaining increased protective effect from their ability to react to new cases with greater speed. Thus, two of the great crimes against the inviolability of the person are being more effectively addressed by the use of this thematic approach. Canada, as the initiator of the Working Group on Disappearances can take much of the credit for this progress. There are many areas to which the approach can be extended; we have adapted it to some already, and no doubt will wish to propose it for others.

You have noticed that I am talking of new contributions which Canada might make to the work of the Commission at the very moment when we are giving up our membership! I know that the prospect of Canada not being on the Commission is almost unthinkable to some Canadians. Coinciding with the retirement of Ambassador Beaulne, they fear that this absence could mark the end of an era of Canadian "activism" in the promotion of human rights on the international scene.

So widespread is this concern that I think I must take this opportunity to ask you to accept that in any body of limited membership, particular states, Canada in this case, must step aside from time to time to allow other states, those of the Western group in this instance, to take a turn. I must assure you that it is the government's intention to seek re-election at the earliest possible date.