

As this special Year begins, we also mark the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons. We must continue to remove barriers to the full participation and integration of persons with disabilities. It is our hope that a consensus for ongoing collaboration can be reached at the Conference in Montreal on October 8 and 9 where my colleague, the Honourable Robert de Cotret, Secretary of State for Canada, will host an International Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Persons with Disabilities.

This past year has seen the resurgence of a particularly vile form of abuse of human rights.

Canada protests, in the strongest terms possible, the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing," whatever its reason, wherever it is being practised. It represents the basest form of inhumanity and abuse of the individual and cannot be tolerated by this world community. In this connection, Canada calls for the drafting of a statute by the International Law Commission to establish an international criminal court. For this purpose, Canada will convene shortly an international meeting of experts to mobilize legal expertise on this matter.

A second major weakness that exists within many Nation States is the absence of a developed system of democratic values and institutions, and this too can ultimately lead to conflict.

One should not be fooled by the outward trappings of democracy. How can peace flourish when a democratically elected leader is placed under house arrest, as in Myanmar, or a democratically elected government is violently overthrown, as in Haiti? A true and lasting democracy requires time and understanding, like a true and lasting friendship, and it requires two-way trust between a nation's peoples and its leaders.

We recognize the enormous challenges facing countries where democracy is in its early stages. We must all promote a climate of trust within these emerging democracies so that new ideas have time to flourish. Canada is doing this through its aid programs and by its participation in the social and economic agencies of this organization.

A third major weakness that exists within Nation States is the inability to make responsible choices in the management of public policy.

Good governance is important because it ensures that adequate attention is paid to social justice, health and education in the provision of government programs and the distribution of government resources. It also promotes equitable economic opportunity through the development of a free-market system. Ultimately, these are the means to defeat poverty.