

accept that this implies a strong commitment to international development. However, regardless of a country's level of development, we expect each nation to move progressively towards internationally-accepted standards and refrain from intentional actions that serve to alienate human rights.

The gap between standards and achievement is great, and in some countries it is growing. But we must not expect rapid change. The goal of obtaining respect for human rights internationally will not be accomplished in a month or a year. We cannot coerce governments to behave decently towards their citizens, even assuming that we know the facts in each case. We can make clear, however, that inhuman treatment and systematic violation of human rights will have a detrimental effect on the relations of the states in question with other states, including Canada.

I believe that international efforts to prevent or alleviate violations of human rights must be oriented towards seeking change. They should promote progressive and systematic evolution to a situation where the citizens of the country in question can live in greater dignity and security.

**Value of
multilateral
action**

In the long run, the most effective means of promoting human rights internationally on a broad basis will lie through multilateral action under the auspices of the United Nations. Canada has been trying to expand UN mechanisms and make them more effective, in dealing with patterns of violations in given countries. We believe that UN action should be taken almost automatically, on the basis of a sound analysis of information received. This would eliminate to the greatest extent possible allegations of political motivation when the performance of a country is called into question. When, for example, the Human Rights Commission identifies a pattern of gross violations, it would dispatch a mission or a special representative to the country in question or request the good offices of a High Commissioner for Human Rights or of the United Nations Secretary-General. The object of the action would be a full investigation with a view to proposing to the government concerned measures to correct the situation. The action would serve to bring international pressure to bear on the government concerned and put international opinion behind the corrective measures proposed by the investigating body.

**United Nations
performance —
dismal, but a
glimmer of
hope**

Over the past decade, the UN's performance in dealing with gross abuses of human rights has been dismal. There has been a lack of common will to take action in many serious situations. Differences of perceptions of human rights that I referred to earlier have been a factor. But, more significantly, a double standard has been in operation. Action has been taken only in a few situations where the UN majority considered that the political situation as well as the human-rights situation warranted action.

Nonetheless, there have been signs in the past year that the UN majority may be coming to accept that it is important to take action in situations of gross and persistent violence to individuals and groups. This was shown by the decision of two developing countries of the Commonwealth to pilot through the General Assembly last year a very significant resolution on human rights. That resolution placed emphasis on the belief that the achievement of lasting progress on civil and
