

HUMAN RIGHTS

Should protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region be a goal for Canada. What is the best strategy and what would be the role for business, government and NGOs in promoting human rights.

Canada needs to develop a strategy to promote human rights that incorporates the use of Tracks I, II and III, keeping in mind however that while human rights are universal, they should be promoted in a culturally sensitive context. Canadian policies and values are often good, but the strategy to implement them can be ineffective (e.g. women and development). Further, cultures are not static, an aspect that should be reflected in the strategy. Issue- or sector-specific initiatives can affect a broader range of civil society (e.g. the training of judges in Asia-Pacific directly targets problems of corruption in the legal system while opening up avenues for reform in other sectors of society). As well, although it is important to work in concert with like-minded countries, it would be a good idea to keep in mind that like-mindedness is more fluid and issue-specific than ever.

Policy Options

- 1. Direct attention at strategies, priorities and application of human rights policies **not at definition.***
- 2. Adopt local strategies that are issue-, sector- and country-specific.*
- 3. Adopt strategies that are multi-faceted targeting civil, political, economic and social spheres. They should also incorporate direct and indirect approaches (Tracks I, II, and III).*
- 4. Maintain and reinforce commitment to the UN system of universal human rights protection, and use the 50th anniversary of the UN Human Rights Declaration to encourage Asia-Pacific region affirmation of these principles. Use other multilateral instruments of the UN and ILO to full advantage.*
- 5. Employ a range of options on a case by case basis to influence compliance with human rights/labour rights, including aid, trade and investment-related incentives and sanctions; for example, in light of the positions adopted by the UN (e.g. Burma, East Timor), demonstrate an increased willingness to act.*
- 6. Support efforts through multilateral institutions to require transparency in financial arrangements and budgets, in order to reduce corruption and hidden military expenditures which often support human rights abuse.*
- 7. Suggest through APEC that Canada host a meeting of Asia-Pacific parliamentarians, early in 1998, to discuss issues of human rights and sustainable development (further to the January 1997 successful meeting in Vancouver).*