

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Issue:

The Canadian position on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Background:

Work on a convention on the rights of the child has been underway in the United Nations since 1979, when Poland submitted a revised draft instrument for consideration. The open-ended working group of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), charged with the elaboration of the convention, completed its task in 1988 and submitted the Draft Convention to the CHR at its 45th session. The CHR approved the text in March 1989. Following the approval of the Economic and Social Council in May 1989, the Draft Convention was forwarded to the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) for final adoption. UNGA adopted the Convention on November 20, 1989, a date which coincided with the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

With the adoption of the Convention by UNGA, it is expected that the CHR will focus its future activities on the consideration of the status of signatures, ratifications and accessions to the instrument. For the Convention to enter into force, 20 states must become party to it (ratify or accede to it).

Canadian Position:

Canada was an active participant in the drafting of the Convention and supported strongly the adoption of the instrument by UNGA. Canada, along with a number of other countries, co-sponsored the UNGA resolution which provided for final adoption of the Convention.

Now that the Convention has been adopted by the U.N., Canada has initiated the necessary consultations that would allow it to sign and eventually ratify the Convention. To this end, the Secretary of State for External Affairs has written to provincial and territorial ministers responsible for intergovernmental affairs seeking the support of those jurisdictions for Canadian signature of the Convention. In light of the extensive consultations that have taken place with the provinces and territories in regard to the Convention, it is expected that such support will be forthcoming in sufficient time to allow Canada to participate at any formal signing ceremony organized by the U.N. The question of Canadian ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will require more detailed consultations with all jurisdictions to ensure Canadian compliance with the obligations set out in the instrument.

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