

response from a broad alliance of national and international authorities, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. Chairman, as I said before this Commission two years ago: the Charter's promise of "human rights for all" will not be fulfilled until the rights and full equality of half the world's population, women, are recognized and respected, in law and practice, in all countries.

This Commission has played an important role in advancing this cause, including through the creation in 1994 of the post Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. The Special Rapporteur has now completed her first term. We believe her work has made an important contribution to the search for concrete solutions that can be applied at all levels of society. At this session, the Canadian Delegation is honoured to lead in seeking renewal of this important mandate for a further three years.

Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned but a few of the substantive areas in which Canada hopes to work with others during the current session of the Commission. However, our agenda will not be complete, and our efforts to advance the many vital causes before us will not reach their potential if inadequate attention is given to the basic health of the United Nations human rights system.

We are, in this regard, entering a period of great challenge and opportunity. On March 10, our proceedings were launched by the words of a new Secretary General, pledging to be a champion of human rights in his own right. Canada has been encouraged by the initial steps he has taken in reforming the Secretariat, identifying human rights as one of the core functions of the United Nations. The further reforms he is developing, and the crucial personnel choices he must now make for the Human Rights Programme, present an opportunity to give operational reality to that vision, and to ensure that human rights will, as he declared last week, be fully integrated into the action of the organization in all domains -- peace and security, development, and humanitarian affairs.

He will have Canada's full support in that effort. He can also count on our contribution in practical ways, including the human rights roster Canada is developing to assist in creating a rapid reaction capacity for the UN and other international organizations.

Next year -- the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and occasion for the 5-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action -- will provide a further critical opportunity to respond to the human rights challenges of a new millennium. A crucial milestone, within our reach for 1998, would be the establishment of an effective and independent International Criminal Court. Canada will spare no effort in seeking to achieve that goal.

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