

Conclusions and Proposals

Group of 78 conference participants approved the following conclusions and proposals:

1. Spend More on Human Rights

Marking the year of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1998 annual conference of the Group of 78 recommended that Canada increase the resources devoted to human rights internationally and encourage other nations to do the same. Members believed such a move is essential after hearing reports of the extremely limited human rights budgets of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

The Group of 78 holds that the time is ripe to spend more on making human rights effective throughout the world because of increasing acceptance of the permeable frontier and widespread revulsion at the traditional stance that national sovereignty protects internal human rights violations. Support should be increased both generally and for promising earmarked human rights initiatives.

Further, members regretted the reduction in Canadian foreign aid to around 0.30 percent of national output, holding that one of the effects is to undercut professed support for human rights. Members deplored the fact that aid has been cut proportionally more than any other program — by 36 percent from fiscal 1991-92 to fiscal 1998-99, compared with 15 percent for overall federal program spending and 25 percent for defence spending. The Group of 78 urges the Government to at least adopt the goal of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation to rebuild aid to 0.35 percent of GNP by 2005-06.

2. Ratify Protocol Against Capital Punishment

The Group of 78 membership felt strongly that Canada should ratify the protocol against capital punishment of the UN convention on political and civil rights, as soon as possible after final approval of the amendment to the *National Defence Act* that removes the last provisions for capital punishment under Canadian law.

3. Ratify American Convention on Human Rights

Members also felt it would strengthen the Organization of American States and Canada's ability to play a full role in it if this country were to ratify the 1959 American Convention on Human Rights administered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS.

4. Coherence in Foreign Policy

The Group of 78 stresses the importance of ensuring coherence among different aspects of foreign policy, including human rights, when Canada participates in international financial institutions.

5. Human Rights as a Threshold Issue

Members were in accord with the active policy of Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy in pressing forward with human rights concerns as a "threshold issue integral to other foreign policy concerns", such as trade. They applauded his view that human rights should be approached "through the more comprehensive lens of 'human security'," and that policy should be concerned not only with remedial actions but also with prevention by getting at root causes.