

organizations - the United Nations through its Commission on Human Rights, the Commission's subsidiary bodies, and bodies established under human rights treaties; the Specialized Agencies of the United Nations; and the Commonwealth.

7. Since 1976, Canadian diplomatic delegations have been at the forefront of efforts within the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and other U.N. bodies in the development of approaches and mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights. Their efforts have been enhanced through consultation and interaction with leading Canadian non-governmental human rights advocates such as the Churches, Amnesty International and more recently native groups.

8. The joint decision of the federal and provincial governments in December 1975 to move towards the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol served as a signal to Canadians and to the international community that Canada was prepared to submit its performance in the area of human rights to international scrutiny. With the ratification in May 1976 of the Covenants, and most particularly of the Optional Protocol, individual Canadians were accorded the international legal right to appeal their causes to an international body.

9. The Continuing Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee of Officials Responsible for Human Rights was established in January 1976 to ensure inter alia the implementation of Canada's international legal commitments in the field of human rights. The Committee has presided over the development of arguably the most comprehensive reports provided by any state party on its implementation of the Covenants. The candour of the reports on continued shortcomings in Canadian performance and the high quality of the participation of federal-provincial delegations in the presentation of Canadian reports to treaty-based organs have been widely remarked upon. Canada's approach to such reviews provides a concrete demonstration of its readiness to listen to and learn from international criticism even as it seeks to promote the protection and development of human rights internationally.

10. It should be added that there is significant and ongoing federal, provincial and non-governmental collaboration on the evolution of Canadian positions for the further development of international law in areas such as the rights of the child, minorities and indigenous populations, where future international law may have a significant bearing on Canada's domestic policies and practices.