

Routine Proceedings

women's rights as human rights. We have constantly stressed the concept of women's rights as an integral component of human rights at the United Nations. We strongly put forward initiatives recognizing, for example, that violence against women is an abuse of human rights.

We have also played an instrumental role in the development of the United Nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women. This declaration is going to be considered at the UN Commission on the Status of Women later this month. It is our hope that it will receive support from nations around the world and will go forward to the UN Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the UN for ratification later this year.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Similarly, Canada is an energetic and constant defender of women's rights in other international forums, including the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, the Organization of American States and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

[*English*]

Women's rights also continue to be a major element of Canada's international aid policy. In 1984 CIDA adopted a women in development policy with the objective of integrating women of the Third World into the development programs, both as agents and beneficiaries. I certainly have had the opportunity to visit many projects around the world in those past eight years and have seen the very positive impact that this policy has had and how we have been a role model for many other countries around the world.

On the occasion of International Women's Day it is important to recall that in times of crisis Canada will provide humanitarian assistance and specifically for women. Indeed there is the statement that my colleague made earlier today reiterating our commitment to provide \$1.5 million to the women and children who are victims of rape, violence and sexual abuse in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I hope that our funds, along with funds from around the world, can help those women to be able to at least recover their lives in some meaningful way after having suffered such horrible atrocities.

The work with respect to International Women's Day is not just abroad. It also applies right here at home. Over the past nine years there have been many changes that have taken place in terms of ensuring and promoting equal opportunities for women. In the work place there have been initiatives such as employment equity and the federal contractors program. I have heard from many persons who feel that the federal contractors program has had an immensely positive impact in enabling women to become involved through various institutions and recipients of government contracts across the country.

Women have also been targeted as a specific group in our training and skills development programs. Education is so vital. Earlier today I had the opportunity to share with some of our Canada scholars the report which the Prime Minister released today on the role of women in trades, technology, science and engineering, a report entitled "Winning With Women". It is a theme which we all take heart in, whether it is in science and technology or in the many other aspects of life where women have so much to offer.

This report identifies the very specific initiatives which we must take to ensure that women will be successful in entering into careers in science, trades and technology. Our Canada scholars program, which requires that 50 per cent of the recipients be women, has played a very important part in bringing about that change.

Whether they are amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act to enhance parental benefits or amendments to the Labour Code that are currently before this House to improve maternity and parental leave and protect pregnant employees, there has been a whole range of initiatives relating to changes in law which have helped to advance and fundamentally ensure women's equality in this country.

Again, perhaps one of the most important ones is the change to the Indian Act to ensure that Indian women would no longer be stripped of their status because they married non-aboriginal persons. That has been enhanced through our work on the Canadian aboriginal economic development strategy to ensure that aboriginal women are also accessing entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance.