

the heartfelt aspirations of the population of this planet. These documents summarize what this great organization is all about: the fostering and protection of rights.

There are three broad areas of human rights that I want to speak about today, Mr. President. The first is the sort of thing that immediately springs to mind when the term human rights is used. These are the political rights, such as those to freedom of speech and association, the right to equal treatment before equitable law, the absence of racial, religious or sexual discrimination. The second area is the right to physical safety, the freedom from war. Finally, I want to speak about the rights arising from our natures as human animals, our needs for food, shelter and an appropriate share of the world's riches.

One need not look far to find a dismaying number of examples of violations of the political rights - all too often committed by a government on its own people. Indochina alone provides too many examples. The uprooting, dislocation and often elimination of so many victims in Kampuchea, the desperate plight of the Loatian refugees, the deliberate expulsion of the Vietnamese boat people are all too well known. The vicious pillage and massacres of the Amin regime in Uganda, and its tragic aftermath, the thousands of women and children in refugee camps, one of which I visited last month in Southern Africa, are matched elsewhere by the execution without trial of ousted politicians or the sudden disappearance or exile for political reasons of ordinary men, women and children in other countries.

These crimes against humanity are common knowledge - the people of the world know what is happening around them. Too often the international community has been reluctant - or culpably slow - to take steps to condemn and rectify these violations of human rights. Too often the political convenience of governments has caused them to remain silent when ordinary people cried out for action. Public opinion today is calling us into account for this lethargy, this disregard for human suffering, this irresponsibility.

And yet, Mr. President, there is cause for hope. By no means have all violations of human rights passed unnoticed by the international community. The conference in Geneva, convened and skilfully conducted by the Secretary General, resulted not only in a substantial humanitarian response in offers of resettlement places and financial aid, but also elicited a political response by the Government of Viet Nam, who have since then been controlling the outflow of refugees. It is still to be determined whether or not the root cause has been settled, and the whole international community will have to watch developments carefully. Pressure on the Government of Viet Nam must be sustained, but substantial progress has obviously been made.