

human dimension of the Final Act that will determine the climate of confidence between us. That such a proposition should itself cause concern is a measure of the distance that still separates us from the objectives we set ourselves at Helsinki.

It is sometimes argued that to place human rights and humanitarian co-operation so high in the scale of priorities is to distort the balance of the Final Act and to distort the balance of the benefits we expect from it. We in Canada cannot subscribe to that argument. The great barrier our efforts are intended to breach is, in the first instance, a barrier between people. We cannot expect to build a structure of co-operation that will prove solid unless it involves our people and unless they identify their interests with it. We cannot proceed on the assumption that relations between states can remain unaffected where respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is seen to be deficient. On the contrary, the link is explicitly drawn in the Final Act and we should do well to keep it in mind as our deliberations go forward.

We acknowledge that many of the principles and provisions of the Final Act are in the form of unilateral undertakings by participating states. We believe, nevertheless, that all these undertakings are a legitimate subject for discussion at our meeting here in Belgrade. This applies to human rights and human contacts, as it does to the other subjects that come within the ambit of our review. We cannot agree that such a discussion constitutes an intervention in the internal affairs of participating states. We are here to measure progress and the only measure we can apply is the degree to which undertakings freely assumed by governments are being carried out.

The point is sometimes made that the problem with human rights is that they are subject to very different interpretations. It is true that different societies attach different weights to particular human rights. It is also true that some societies claim precedence for the rights of the collectivity over those of the individual. We are not here to arbitrate those differences. But we do not believe that matters of definition should stand in the way of conscientious performance. We are not, after all, writing on an unwritten page. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is common ground between us. So, between many of us, are the relevant international covenants. The Final Act itself, in declaring human rights to derive from "the inherent dignity of the human person", has surely dispelled whatever doubt there may have been of where our obligations lie.

All our governments could probably claim to have put in place an adequate legislative basis for assuring the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms. But concepts in this field are evolving and there is a need to ensure that this evolution is progressively reflected in our laws. We