

FOREWORD by the Honourable Lois M. Wilson

For some time, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Canada have been concerned about the lack of institutional mechanisms for the domestic **implementation** of the United Nations' international human rights covenants, particularly the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Responding to this critical moment in the maturation of the human rights movement in Canada, a pilot first step consultation was launched by a small group drawn from key NGOs in Canada on my initiative. What became known as the Human Rights Linkages Initiative was designed to link civil society human rights activists with Parliamentarians; domestic with international activists; academics with activists; and provincial with federal human rights actors, all within the context of the two United Nations covenants. The development of a common strategy for implementation necessitated collaboration, and the casting aside of people's pet agendas or specific resolutions they might have wished to promote through such a gathering.

The Canada-wide consultation was by invitation only, and was to particular persons with specific expertise in the subject and not by organization. It affirmed the expertise of different actors in different areas of human rights. It took place over a two-day period, so was limited in terms of time, focus and capacity. It was not called so that human rights activists could complain about Canada's shortcomings in human rights implementation, but rather to be a first step in devising strategies to move the human rights agenda ahead domestically, in the light of international obligations.

What we accomplished was agreement on an action plan in eleven areas that were identified as having priority on Canada's human rights domestic scene. The reader will find these areas identified in this report, as well as the lead persons who will be mobilizing the human rights community for further work. My office will continue as a networking centre. We expect to include in ongoing work, many people who were not in attendance at the consultation, and indeed invite their participation by accessing the contact listed in this report.

We thank the participants, the academics who prepared papers, the discussants, facilitators and rapporteurs, as well as those agencies that contributed financially to make the consultation possible. Thanks also to Senate security staff and to my staff whose tireless work guaranteed a smooth consultation.