

The Canadian delegation wishes to commend the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Angelo Vidal d'Almeida Ribeiro, for his excellent second report on the implementation of the Declaration. Mrs. Odio-Benito's report to the Sub-Commission on the phenomenon of religious intolerance throughout the world also makes a significant contribution to our consideration of this topic. In light of these reports, we must identify appropriate strategies to ensure more effective implementation of the principles of the Declaration and meet the Commission's responsibilities to religious minorities throughout the world.

In the view of my delegation, Mr. Ribeiro has identified very well the complexity of the phenomenon, and has appropriately and convincingly stressed the responsibilities governments bear in matters of religious intolerance and repression. Canada agrees that states have the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion mentioned in the Declaration.

The Special Rapporteur has entered into discussion with governments about specific alleged infringements of the provisions of the Declaration. This approach is fully in keeping with his mandate and that of the Commission, and all states should be prepared to respond to the enquiries made by the Special Rapporteur. We commend those governments which have provided their cooperation and hope that this dialogue will continue. We also hope that those governments which have been reluctant to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur will come to realize that such an attitude serves only to lend weight to the charges against them. The obstacles created by a lack of cooperation should, in my delegation's view, be addressed forthrightly in the resolutions and decisions of this body.

Mr. Ribeiro has also made a number of useful recommendations concerning the need for states to harmonize their legislation and administrative practices with existing international norms, the importance of attitudinal change as an essential component for ending religious discrimination, the prospective value of training courses for persons responsible for the application of relevant laws and administrative practices, the introduction of educational programmes, and the establishment of machinery ensuring regular meetings of government representatives with non-governmental organizations and religious leaders to discuss problems of intolerance on the basis of religion or belief.