

4/16

2

public services, and multicultural programmes promoting the benefits of a diverse society have become part of the very fabric of Canadian society.

Canada's Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, has put this comprehensive view of human rights in the following terms: "Human rights is not an abstract legal notion or a fashionable political theory in industrialized countries. Human rights means an opportunity for a human being to be sufficiently nourished; adequately housed; suitably clothed; to be educated and to educate his children as well; to have access to proper medical treatment; to earn a living; and to keep his or her family free from financial worries. Human rights means respect for the dignity of each human being."

Against this background, Mr. Chairman, we frankly see nothing to be gained in debates over whether developed countries are overly concerned with political and civil rights, or whether developing countries should give first or exclusive priority to economic, social and cultural rights, or should be held to a lesser standard of respect for civil and political rights.

History is replete with examples of both good and bad human rights records among developed and developing countries alike. And the profound changes which have been engulfing the world in recent years demonstrate the crucial role which freedom and democratic processes and institutions play in the development process. A country's potential for social and economic development turns on the freedom its citizens enjoy to participate fully in all aspects of society, no less than on governmental commitment to material prosperity. In other words, adherence to universal human rights standards clearly cannot be regarded as a mere function of GNP.

This does not imply the imposition of "western" values or forms of government. Guarantees of basic political freedoms can, and do, translate into different political structures based on specific national traditions, needs and habits of thought, just as economic and social programmes are shaped according to national circumstances.

Canada would like to place itself squarely in the middle of the growing consensus that these two sets of rights -- as embodied in the Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights -- are not competing priorities but two essential kinds of human rights which are fundamentally inter related, or as some would have it, which are 'indivisible'. We believe this holds one of the keys to the improvement of international understanding and cooperation in the field of human rights.