

share the cautious optimism expressed by the Sri Lankan human rights community, and with them are concerned that this initial, fragile progress be supported by effective implementation of specific measures to improve human rights.

Though not a government party to international conventions on human rights, the record of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in human rights is completely unacceptable by any international standard. In areas under LTTE control there is no freedom of speech, opinion, conscience or movement. The LTTE has been responsible for attacks on civilians in the north, east and south, including terrorist bombings and political assassinations. In areas it controls, the LTTE is responsible for summary executions, the use of civilians as "human shields", violations of ICRC and UNHCR safety zones, forced recruitment and recruitment of children, and abductions of civilians. The LTTE allows the ICRC only limited access to prisoners of war and denies access to Tamil political prisoners.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada believes that negotiation and dialogue are essential to any lasting solution in the northeast. The LTTE must play a major role in any peace process, and needs to demonstrate its good faith both in terms of dialogue and in the re-establishment of the democratic process in areas under its control. The fact that the Kumuratunga government has engaged in discussions with the LTTE is welcome, and we are encouraged by recent indications that the two sides have resumed contacts.

Canada applauds the Kumuratunga government decision to draft legislation to create a National Human Rights Commission, a long standing CHR commitment. We would hope that the Commission will have a clear mandate which protects its independence, guarantees its impartiality and provides it with sufficient authority to render meaningful judgements.

Canada intends to build on its experience of the last few years and increase the proportion of its official development assistance directed towards strengthening non-governmental and governmental institutions responsible for human rights, good government and democracy.

Canada has again brought the issue of human rights violations in Sri Lanka to the attention of the Third Committee of UNGA, having taken the lead in drafting strong statements for the Chair at the last two sessions of the CHR. We expect the government of Sri Lanka to fully honour its CHR50 commitments.

Canada believes that the time has come for the international community, concerned governments and NGOs to seriously explore and expose the dismal human rights record of the LTTE. Strong international pressure must be brought to bear on the LTTE to improve its conduct and to negotiate in good faith a just solution to Sri Lanka's long and bloody conflict. In this effort, Canada, for its part, is well placed to use the credibility and influence as the home of the largest Sri Lankan Tamil community outside of South Asia.