

In Europe, Canada took the lead in Copenhagen at the CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension in proposing strengthened commitments and the rights of minorities. We are currently discussing an office for free elections and democratic institutions as part of the new CSCE structure. And we have encouraged NATO to adopt programs -- including scholarships -- which will allow it to share its democratic experiences with its old adversaries.

In addition, we have established a Political Co-operation Fund as part of our Program of Assistance for Central and Eastern Europe. That fund will provide grants and contributions to foster dialogue and co-operation with those countries so as to encourage democratic institutions, political pluralism, the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

In the past year alone, Canada has assisted in elections in Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. We sent election observers to Namibia and provided 100 RCMP officers to help ensure stability as that society moves towards democracy. We are currently helping Benin as it moves away from totalitarianism. We have agreed in principle to participate in a Commonwealth observer mission for Guyana and have sent election observers last month to Malaysia through the Commonwealth. We participated in the OAS and UN efforts in Nicaragua, are working with both these organizations in the upcoming elections in Haiti, and are prepared to assist the UN in constructing democracy in the Western Sahara and Cambodia.

Those activities relate to elections. But we are providing other types of assistance beyond the mechanics. In South Africa, we are assisting that country move towards a multiracial democracy. Canadian expertise is being offered to all parties. But in order to level the playing field, we are providing financial support to the black majority to conduct constitutional research, consultations and development. In addition, we are supporting a two-year research project on constitutional development in a post-apartheid South Africa, a project being led by a Canadian professor in criminology.

There are other areas where human rights and democratic development can be furthered.

Literacy is one. Increasing literacy provides a better ability to participate in political and economic life. Canada is already involved in this area and will continue to be, particularly for women and children who are the major victims of illiteracy.