

Mr. Chairman,

On the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, and more than one year after the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the United Nations system is still not adequately equipped to meet the growing demands and expectations confronting it in the field of human rights. Recent years have witnessed dramatic global political change marked by the end of the Cold War and growing support for more democratic and open societies in Eastern and Central Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the same time, in some parts of the world, these changes have been accompanied by violent forms of human rights abuses, placing new demands on the international human rights system. The challenge is still before us, therefore, to enhance the ability of the United Nations to promote and protect human rights, both as a Charter purpose in its own right and as a means of furthering the goals of economic and social development and maintaining international peace and security.

The Canadian government would like to express its appreciation for the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. José Ayala Lasso, who has shown exemplary dedication in facing the challenges that have marked his first year in office. My government will continue to support the High Commissioner in the fulfilment of his difficult mandate.

Today, I will focus my remarks on a range of specific situations which have preoccupied the international community in the past year, or which, in the view of Canada, warrant our attention. This year, the starting point for any such review must clearly be the tragedy in Rwanda.

The wave of massacres in Rwanda has claimed between 500,000 and one million persons, mostly Tutsis, but also Hutus. To prevent this genocide from recurring, those responsible must be tried before an international tribunal. The perpetrators of revenge killings must also be brought to justice in order to re-establish the confidence required for the refugees to return home. A strong resolution expressing the international community's outrage over all human rights violations must be adopted.

We hope that the recent agreement between the government and the opposition in Burundi can restore stability and ease tension in a country where up to 100,000 murders have occurred in the past year. The international community must demonstrate its support for the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to deploy as a preventive measure teams of human rights monitors in this country.

The International War Crimes Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has begun its operations but flagrant violations of human rights are still occurring. The recent incursion by Bosnian Serb forces into the UN safe area of Bihac is only the most recent example. The abhorrent policy of "ethnic cleansing" continues to be applied, in particular by Bosnian Serb forces, against civilian populations in most of the former Yugoslavia. We commend the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, for his important work in exposing the extent of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Canada fully supports the

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