

The Canadian Government regards the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Program as among the most fundamentally important components of the UN structure. We see our deliberations in connection with the ECOSOC review as an occasion to take stock of the extent to which current procedures and support systems do justice to the priority which is assigned to human rights by the Charter.

The Secretariat has prepared a paper which provides an excellent basis for our work in this regard. The details of this draft report are being discussed in the informal working group chaired by the distinguished representative of Italy. For the purposes of our discussion today I would like only to highlight a few of the essential considerations from my delegation's viewpoint.

First, as regards priorities, the Government of Canada shares the view of others who have said before us that the overriding objective of the United Nations in the field of human rights must be the effective implementation of established standards. In the words used by the Secretary-General in his recent statement on the work of the United Nations in the 1990's, "the main focus of United Nations human rights activities should be on bringing universal respect in fact for what has been agreed in principle". This fundamental principle should feature prominently in the Commission's report to the ECOSOC Review, and my delegation has joined with others in advancing some proposals to this end in the informal working group.

In this connection, Mr. Chairman, one challenge which increasingly demands this body's attention is that of ensuring the viability and effectiveness of machinery established to implement the various covenants and conventions in the human rights field. Financial problems being experienced by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and by the Committee Against Torture -- only in its first year of operations, bear witness to the need to give serious consideration to new ideas -- such as those contained in document NGO/36 from the Four Directions Council, for the strengthening and consolidation of monitoring machinery both for conventions in place and for those under elaboration. My delegation hopes to pursue this theme in greater detail at future sessions of the Commission.