

3.0 Agency do not inadvertently undermine human rights.

1.1 Participants agreed that the prospects for durable improvement must be a central consideration for Canada to act. However, effectiveness may not be the only consideration in all circumstances. There is no automatic relationship between the severity of human rights abuses and the capacity of the international community to combat them. Nevertheless, there are situations of serious human rights abuses where Canada must take a lead and act on the basis of its societal values and traditions. It was noted that CIDA, for example, can work towards achieving something worthwhile in almost any human rights situation.

1.2 There was no consensus on when Canada should "use the megaphone." For some participants, symbolism is a legitimate objective in situations, such as humanitarian emergencies or repression by pariah regimes, where Canada has a duty to act irrespective of the short-term outcomes. For others, notably those inside Government, symbolism can be a destructive policy. The case of aid sanctions against Indonesia in 1992 was cited as an example where symbolism may have made it more difficult for Canada to engage Indonesia on human rights. However, even in circumstances where the Government may opt against public condemnation, it is very important for Canada to support NGOs to use the megaphone responsibly and with effect. In doing so, Canada is helping to universalize human rights norms as an essential part of globalization.

2.0 Niche. Several participants argued that Canada's primary human rights niche is to be *engagé*. This disposition towards a pragmatic, flexible and constructive style of diplomacy sets Canada apart from some other allies. And it enables Canada to be an effective international human rights advocate. One policy implication of a disposition to constructive engagement is to focus on those countries that are already showing a commitment to progress on human rights.