

session of the Human Rights Commission was marked by increasing politicization of proceedings, particularly in light of the Indochina situation. Nevertheless, the Canadian delegation took important initiatives in the area of disappeared persons and the mass exodus of refugees caused by gross human rights violations, which will be considered further at the 1980 session. There were some successes, namely the adoption of resolutions dealing with a proposed declaration on religious intolerance and a convention on torture. A Canadian draft resolution on the human rights situation in Democratic Kampuchea was discussed but not voted on; the matter will be raised again at the next session. The Commission adopted a Canadian resolution proposing the appointment of a special rapporteur to enquire into human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea.

Canada continued to play an active role in the protection and promotion of human rights at the annual session of the UN General Assembly. For the first time, the Secretary of State for External Affairs devoted the entire Canadian statement to the Assembly to the question of human rights. Miss MacDonald urged the United Nations to improve its ability to deal with the most serious situations, and called for the establishment of an Office of Under-Secretary General for Human rights. Progress was made in the Third Committee of the Assembly (Social and Humanitarian Affairs) in furthering the idea of such an Office to exercise a good offices function of the Secretary General in response to serious human rights situations. Canada also condemned the gross abuse of human rights in Indochina, particularly in Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea, and called for attention to the root causes of massive outflows of refugees in face of such violations.

The Human Rights Committee, the monitoring body established under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, continued to meet in 1979 to consider reports submitted by member states on measures taken by them to implement the terms of the Covenant. The Report of Canada on implementation of the provisions of the Covenant was submitted in April. Under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant (to which Canada acceded in 1976 as well as to the two covenants on human rights), the Committee was also empowered to consider communications from individuals alleging human rights violations within the territory of states party to the protocol. Professor Walter Tarnopolsky of Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, is one of the 18 experts who sit in a personal capacity on the Committee to review government reports and individual communications.

When the Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Lusaka in August 1979, they welcomed in principle an initiative by Gambia for the establishment of a Commonwealth Human Rights Commission. They also requested the Secretary General to appoint a suitably qualified and representative working party to make recommendations for the consideration of Commonwealth governments. The work-

ing party is expected to meet in 1980 before the next meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers.

On November 20, 1979, Miss MacDonald announced that Canada submitted a declaration to the United Nations under Article 41 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recognizing the competence of the Human Rights Committee to consider communications from governments of other countries that have submitted similar declarations. Canada thereby also acquired the right to submit communications about these countries.

## Refugees

The world-wide refugee problem remained serious throughout 1979. The UNHCR estimated there were approximately 10 million refugees throughout the world, with as many as 4 million in Africa alone. In response to this serious problem and reflecting the specific refugee provisions in the 1978 Immigration Act, Canada formulated in 1979, after consultation with the provinces and the non-governmental agencies, its first annual refugee resettlement plan. In the past, each refugee crisis was dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. Decisions were normally made under pressure of time and urgent events; little consultation, particularly with the provinces, was possible. The object of the annual refugee plan was to introduce as much co-ordination and forward planning as possible into an area which will always contain an element of unpredictability. The 1979 plan comprised specific components for Indochinese, East Europeans and Latin Americans; in addition, there was a separate category for other convention refugees as well as a significant contingency reserve. In all, the 1979 plan initially provided for an intake of 10,000 refugees. The rapid deterioration of the refugee situation in Southeast Asia involved substantial revision of this original target.

Throughout 1979, international attention focused particularly on the tragic exodus from the countries of Indochina. The boat exodus from Vietnam increased dramatically in 1979; in all, nearly 210,000 Vietnamese fled their country in the course of the year. In response to the exodus, the United Nations convened in July 1979, in Geneva, an Indochina Refugee Conference. A number of countries, including Canada, made significant pledges of resettlement places and/or financial contributions. Canada announced an increased Indochina program of 50,000 refugees for the period July 1979 to December 1980 and also an additional contribution of \$500,000 to the Indochina program of the UNHCR. This resettlement commitment represents Canada's most ambitious refugee program since the close of World War II; on a per capita basis, it is the most generous Indochina policy of all the major resettlement countries. By the end of the year, approximately 24,000 of the refugees had arrived in Canada.

For those tens of thousands of Indochinese refugees who will not be resettled in third countries, for those who fled