

Governments that are genuinely committed to protecting human rights should receive encouragement and assistance of the international community.

Since 1984, Canada has contributed over \$100 million to development assistance activities aimed at promoting civil and political rights, aimed at fostering democracy and building vibrant civil societies.

The United Nations must do more, much more, to assist developing countries and countries in Eastern and Central Europe to improve their institutions for administration of justice, and to promote free and fair elections.

And we need to encourage international financial institutions to review the implications of their policies and programs for human rights.

Among the initiatives Canada is actively promoting at this conference is the development of co-operation between independent national institutions, such as the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the growing number of such institutions emerging in other parts of the world.

Enhancing the UN Human Rights System

The strengthening of the overall United Nations human rights system is the critical issue of this conference.

The situation in the former Yugoslavia might be different if preventive diplomacy, as outlined in the Secretary-General's "Agenda for Peace," had been put into practice. The Secretary-General has proposed mechanisms to identify human rights problems that can trigger mass migrations and other forms of instability. This conference must endorse these proposals.

And we must enhance the effectiveness of the mechanisms we already have -- treaty bodies and rapporteurs, as well as the Commission on Human Rights itself. And, we must stop talking about an International Criminal Court and start taking the practical steps necessary to set it up.

There is also a need for much greater co-ordination and co-operation among various agencies involved with human rights. For example, the work of the International Labour Organization, which plays a crucial role in protecting the fundamental rights of workers worldwide, must be better integrated with that of other UN agencies.

The Human Rights Centre in Geneva should become a "centre of excellence" for the promotion and protection of human rights within the United Nations system.