

The Ottawa meeting did produce one good result: some states had claimed that the discussion of human rights in all countries of the Final Act was beyond the ambit of CSCE meetings, but made their own claim indefensible by themselves engaging in criticism of practices in other countries. This is a development we welcome. However, those countries -- and they included those which maintained that the Final Act was a sacred text which could not be varied, having been signed by the highest political leaders -- made an attempt to turn the Final Act on its head by claiming that rights which received only indirect treatment in the Final Act were of greater consequence than those fundamental human rights which were the main object of the seventh principle. It will have to be recognized that certain rights are fundamental and others are goals to be pursued -- goals which will be progressively elaborated and expanded. This distinction is found in the language of the seventh principle and also in the United Nations documents to which the final paragraph of that principle particularly refers.

At the opening of the Ottawa meeting, I said that issues of central importance such as human rights cannot and must not be avoided just because they are sensitive and can sometimes give rise to disagreement between governments. The subject of human rights will remain prominent on the international agenda, because respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential to the development of friendly relations and cooperation among us.

Mr. Chairman, when the Final Act was adopted, nobody expected an instant change in human rights practices, or in other fields. What we expected was a gradual improvement, just as those of us who believe deeply in individual human rights continually try to improve our own performance. It is movement in the opposite direction, inadvertently or deliberately, that we must guard against: non-compliance in one area raises serious doubts about the likelihood that commitments in other fields will be fulfilled.

I recognize, Mr. Chairman, that there is a gulf within the CSCE between two very different approaches to the relationship between the individual and the state. We would be deluding ourselves if we thought these differences in approach would disappear quickly. Others, however, would be mistaken if they concluded that Canada's concerns about human rights, human contacts and freer and wider dissemination of information, arose from a desire to disturb the internal stability of other states; we simply