

5.11 The Committee affirms that human rights, good governance and democratic development are universal values that should find central expression in Canadian foreign policy, influencing and guiding other areas of policy. Canada should seek to promote the global respect of these values through a wide range of instruments, including dialogue and programs of co-operation. In the case of countries whose governments are responsible for serious violations of human rights, Canada should work with others to change such behaviour, resorting where necessary to measures up to and including the termination of bilateral assistance. In such cases, Canada should continue to provide assistance to the poor and vulnerable groups through non-governmental organizations.

Response

The Government agrees with the Committee's assessment that human rights, good governance and democratic development are universal values that should find central expression in Canadian foreign policy (see also the response to recommendation 3.7).

The Government therefore reaffirms its commitment to the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. This Centre will continue to play an important role in the advancement of Canadian objectives.

The Government regards respect for human rights not only as a fundamental value, but also as a crucial element in the development of democratic and prosperous societies at peace with each other. The essential challenge is to decide how we can best influence other governments to respect basic human rights. Our ultimate aim is not to punish countries and innocent populations whose governments abuse human rights, but rather to change behaviour and to induce governments to respect their peoples' rights. Responses to specific situations require careful balancing of many considerations — above all the effectiveness of the means of influence at our disposal. Canadian efforts to support human rights will rely on a variety of means, including dialogue and co-ordinated efforts through multilateral forums.

Development assistance is a constructive way to address human rights, democracy and governance issues. As one of six priorities for ODA, assistance in this area will support such activities as peace and reconciliation initiatives, human rights education, widening access to legal remedies, strengthening legislatures and judicial systems, and increasing the capacity of organizations and other representatives of civil society to participate fully and effectively in decision making in their countries. Canada will continue to work with a broad range of partners, including governments, NGOs and multilateral organizations to promote our objectives.

High-profile aid and trade measures may play a role in responding to gross, systematic and persistent violations of internationally agreed human rights standards. Canadian assistance,