

peace through the demobilization of the guerrillas. Pablo Escobar's escape from prison in July was embarrassing. The prison where he was detained turned out to be a well protected base from which to direct his drug running operations. The Minister of Justice and the Acting Chief of the Air Force were obliged to resign and President Gaviria's reputation was considerably weakened by a continuing Congressional investigation. The Government response to the violence was to introduce a 90 day state of emergency on November 8. Spending on defense and public order is set to double in 1993.

Colombia's indigenous peoples have been especially affected by conflicts over land ownership. A delegation from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) visited Colombia in October to review the human rights situation and to assess the merits of continuing a major CIDA/CUSO project. The delegation strongly supported the project but indicated that it would like to see more denunciations by Canada of abuses in Colombia. However, the group acknowledged that the new constitution significantly enhances the rights of indigenous peoples - a view shared by Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. It provides for education that respects cultural identity and allows for the exercise of a significant degree of self government. The constitution contains many explicit and wide ranging provisions in respect to women's rights. Social spending will account for 28% of the 1993 budget.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada deplores violations of human rights in Colombia and supports the efforts of the Government to improve the human rights situation, including the reduction in general violence from whatever source. The Canadian Embassy in Bogota maintains close contacts with Colombian NGOs (e.g. the Inter American Legal Services Association, Comision Andina de Juristas, and human rights critic Alfred Vasquez Carrizosa) and with the Office of the Presidential Advisor for the Defense, Protection and Promotion of Human Rights. He visited Canada last March to meet with NGOs, media representatives and government officials. The Embassy periodically draws Canadian concerns and special cases to the attention of the Colombian authorities. In 1991 and 1992, a Colombian attended the human rights summer course offered under the aegis of the Canadian Human Rights Foundation. Canada recognizes the importance of an objective, secure judiciary in safeguarding human rights and has supported projects to improve the delivery of justice and to establish a network of human rights ombudsmen at the local level.

While recognizing that the situation is not ideal, Canada considers that its present approach to addressing the human rights concerns in Colombia represents the most effective means of positive influence. The widespread sympathy in the international community for the difficult circumstances confronting the Colombian Government was illustrated in the rejection, by this year's session of the Sub-Commission on the Protection of Minorities, of a proposed resolution on Colombia. Support for Colombia at CHR will inevitably be more pronounced.