

That is a proper pursuit for a Western democracy which has been blessed with the fruits of freedom. It is also natural for a nation of immigrants, many of whom know only too well the withering burden of oppression. For Canadians, as for Americans, the defence of human rights is an obligation of a free people.

But the fight against apartheid has been an element of Canadian foreign policy not simply because the cause is so compelling. Canada has also believed that this is a question where we can make a difference.

That is because Canada enjoys a good and strong relationship with South Africa's black neighbours. We do not carry the colonial baggage of some other Western countries. We are active members of the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and the G-7 - in fact the only country to belong to all of these groups. That is important where co-operative action is the most effective force for change.

The role of the Commonwealth in the fight against apartheid has been central. It has been in the vanguard, as it was in setting the framework for the evolution of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Its membership is global and multi-racial. It is well representative of the African region. It crosses the line between the developed and the developing world.

The Commonwealth has been important in two crucial respects. First, it has put the apartheid issue on the international agenda. Without the leadership of the Commonwealth, I think it is fair to say that the world community's focus on South Africa would be weaker and far less coherent.

Second, and just as important, the Commonwealth has acted as an on-going forum for reasoned dialogue. Through the process of formulating policies and designing courses of action, an invaluable and unique exchange of views has enriched the understanding of all its members. Rigidities and unrealistic stances have been avoided. The result has been an integrated strategy to both put pressure on South Africa and to encourage - in a positive sense - dialogue and compromise between the parties.