

A careful judgement must be made as to the results which can be achieved. In some instances, a bilateral expression of Canadian concern about a situation may bring about positive change; in others it may cause a negative reaction and do nothing to help the very persons or groups about which we are concerned. At times it is useful to make public the fact that we have interceded with a government. At others, it is counter-productive. We have had some limited success, I might note, in dealing bilaterally, and in the context of the CSCE Final Act, with Eastern European countries on humanitarian matters relating to the reunification of families. On the other hand our efforts on broader human rights issues, when dealt with bilaterally or within the CSCE context, have met with minimal success. Our broader human rights concerns in relation to Eastern Europe may better be advanced by challenging Eastern European countries on the basis of the legal obligations which they have assumed as parties to the international human rights covenants. Their performance in terms of civil and political rights is, as is ours, thereby subject to scrutiny by the Human Rights Committee established under the terms of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They and we must also report regularly on our progressive realization of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defined in the other Covenant.

Action in the United Nations cannot be divorced from action outside the United Nations. Canada's relations with some countries are limited or indeed nonexistent, and there are therefore few possibilities for quiet diplomacy. I have in mind the cases of Uganda and Democratic Kampuchea. In the first case, our action at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting was followed up with pressure for action in the Human Rights Commission. In the second, after an on-the-spot enquiry carried out by Canadian officials among Kampuchean refugees, we provided a detailed report to the Human Rights Commission and called for action. I then spoke out in strong terms in the United Nations and called for action both by the General Assembly and by the Human Rights Commission. We had concluded that the self-imposed isolation of the Kampuchean government made it essential to take unusually strong steps. We felt compelled to urge the international community to pay heed to the tragic situation prevailing in that beleaguered country.