



# Statements and Speeches

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## THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A Statement by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, in the House of Commons, December 8, 1978.

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sunday is the thirtieth anniversary of that event. It should be used in Canada and all parts of the world as an occasion to review the progress or the lack of progress that has been made in these three decades towards guaranteeing human rights. More significantly, it must be used as an opportunity to identify what more can be done, both internationally and in Canada, to ensure that the rights and freedoms enunciated in the Universal Declaration are effectively enjoyed by all people.

The agreement 30 years ago on the principles of the Universal Declaration was a remarkable achievement by the international community, given the wide variations in political and social systems throughout the world. One of the people directly involved in that success was Dr John P. Humphrey, a Canadian. In his former role as the Director of the United Nations Human Rights Division, he oversaw the drafting of the Declaration. He is to speak on behalf of Canada at a special commemorative meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on December 11. The principles of the Declaration have been elaborated and defined in more than 20 international agreements. However, we are all painfully aware that the existence of those agreements has not created a world in which human rights are respected. In many countries there are gross violations of even the most basic human rights. Often these violations are perpetrated deliberately by governments, and on occasion by governments that have freely assumed legal obligations to respect those rights. The international community must find ways to rectify this unpalatable situation. Canadians look to the United Nations to do so.

The member states of the United Nations have not given it the power to oblige governments to respect human rights. But it is a forum where world opinion can and should be focused on those governments that persistently abuse the rights of their citizens. Canada is firmly committed to efforts to improve the performance of the United Nations in the human-rights field.

In Canada, we have made considerable progress in the past 30 years. That progress has been influenced by the international obligations we have assumed. Every province has adopted human-rights legislation and has established a provincial human-rights commission to consider complaints from individuals. The Federal Government has adopted important human-rights legislation and has established the Canadian Human Rights Commission....