

the international statute books. Unfortunately the gap between promise and performance has not narrowed much. Reports of gross and persistent inhumanity continue to claim the attention of the world community. Governments continue to renege on commitments they have freely assumed in international instruments.

In short, we are still a long way from an international consensus on human rights. Historians will wonder why it should have been so. They will be hard put to it to explain how we could be very near a consensus on how to preserve the quality of our seas and yet unable to conduct so much as a civil dialogue on how to preserve the dignity of the human person. They will be hard put to it to explain how we had begun to redistribute resources internationally to sustain human beings in their material needs but could not ensure that men and women would be free to exercise their most elementary human rights.

Here, as elsewhere, we have a choice. Human rights are a problem of international dimensions. Their recognition and promotion, as the Secretary-General reminds us, are "a legitimate concern of the world community". The new prominence that human rights has acquired is part of the natural evolution of an international system. Like so many other concerns, the concern about human rights can no longer be contained behind national boundaries. It is not a matter of laying down to governments how they should fashion their political or economic systems. It is simply a matter of making certain that governments observe the fundamental decencies of civilized life to which they have all pledged allegiance.

The issue of human rights will not go away. We have a clear choice. We can decide that the United Nations must face the issue squarely, or we shall be forced to go elsewhere to seek a tolerable international consensus. In the view of the Canadian Government the choice is clear. We believe that the United Nations is ideally equipped to evaluate objectively, dispassionately and impartially allegations of human-rights violations. The better it is seen to function, the more confidence this organization will command and the less individual governments will feel bound to call for action against others for gross and persistent violations of human rights.

We believe that the United Nations can improve its investigation of allegations of human-rights violations. We welcome, therefore, as a significant precedent, the decision of the Government of Chile to receive an investigating group. My Government also considers that the capacity of the Office of the Secretary-General to investigate and to intercede when necessary, as well as its authority to do so, should be augmented. Canada further proposes that the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights be empowered to meet between sessions to consider apparent serious violations of human rights, and when necessary to make its views known to governments.

Human rights can be violated in many ways, but surely one of the most despicable is international terrorism. Innocent lives are placed in jeopardy, while the culprits often go unpunished or even undetected. Terrorism holds our society to ransom, and threatens governments in all parts of the world. There must be no confusion between ends and means. Terrorism is beyond the bounds of legitimate dissent. It degrades