

commitment to the universal character of basic human rights and freedoms.

We understand that democracy can take different forms, just as economic and social programs are shaped by different national circumstances. And we recognize that no society is perfect: the quest for rights and freedoms presents a never-ending challenge for all governments.

But human rights principles are universal -- they reflect the natural aspirations of all human beings. They do not, as some suggest, represent uniquely Western values. Freedom of opinion or speech, due process of law, or quality of all persons regardless of distinction, these are principles no less applicable to individuals in one part of the world than in any other part of the world. Torture is torture in anyone's language.

Human Rights: A Key to Peace and Development

The promotion and protection of human rights internationally is more than just a matter of values -- it is a matter of basic mutual interest. As Article 55 of the UN Charter makes clear, respect for human rights is a key to a more peaceful and prosperous world for all.

And as Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali has emphasized, "there has never been a more evident need for an integrated approach to the objectives of peace, democracy and human rights and the requirements of development."

All human rights, civil and political, economic, social and cultural are integral to sustainable development. There is no time for sterile debate about the relative importance of different human rights. This is no "either/or" proposition.

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, which Canada supported on adoption in 1986, underlines the responsibility of all countries and of the international community as a whole to strive for the realization of all universally recognized rights. There are encouraging signs. The latest United Nations Development Program Report on Human Development notes that "close to two-thirds of humankind now live in countries that are moving towards, or are already enjoying, democratic forms of government."

That report stands as testament to a simple reality: that a country's potential for social and economic development is inextricably linked to the freedom of its citizens to participate fully in all aspects of society.