

give a more central role to the Economic and Social Council and for arrangements in the Secretariat designed to support this role. It is not too soon to envisage the Economic and Social Council in permanent session, taking up groups of issues in some orderly fashion and giving close attention to the implementation of decisions taken at UN special conferences. The recommendations of the *Habitat* conference, for example, of which Canada had the honour to act as host, require thorough and expert scrutiny.

We recognize as well that many members believe the Charter reflects better the world of 1945 than the world of today. We agree that useful changes might be made. But here, as in other matters, the best may be the enemy of the good. Canada takes the view that the present balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council, which is the central issue of the Charter reform, is preferable to any alternative. The question of the Council's membership may be debatable, but its powers and structure still serve us well. So, too, does the principle of equal rights in the General Assembly. If the UN is to evolve gradually into a body capable of making decisions that affect the vital interests of all states, it must follow procedures which give confidence to its members that these interests are secure.

Human rights

The coming into force this year of the covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights is a major step forward for the UN. As a member of the Commission on Human Rights, Canada will now direct its efforts principally towards the protection of the rights defined in the covenants and in the Declaration [on Human Rights]. One obvious means is to make effective the investigative and appeal mechanisms that are now established. These mechanisms require that states be willing to accept impartial examination of any alleged failures to abide by their commitments. A Court of Human Rights, as proposed by my German colleague, is a step we should consider. None of us have perfect records. To fall short of the aspirations inscribed in the covenants and the Declaration on Human Rights is not a matter for partisan polemics but for sober assessment.

The obstacles ahead are formidable. Appeals against violations of human rights can be a threat to the legitimacy of some governments and an embarrassment to others. No state is immune to criticism in this regard, although some manage to deflect attention, while others become the centre of attraction. Canada will speak out to the best of its knowledge without regard for power or favour. We attach particular importance to the full implementation of the terms of the