

For our part, we are keenly aware of the importance of respecting the human rights of all our people. From the beginning, Canada has sought to build and maintain its unity on the basis of freedom, tolerance and openness. These ideals are as vital for us as they are for people everywhere.

Last Thursday, we experienced an historic moment in our country when Article XV of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect. Under this Article, the law applies equally to everybody, and discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or physical or mental disability is prohibited.

As Minister in the External Affairs portfolio responsible for human rights considerations in Canadian foreign policy, I am aware of the high degree of interest among Canadians in the promotion of human rights in all countries. Prime Minister Mulroney's government recognizes the important place of human rights in Canada's relations with other countries, whether reflected in our bilateral ties or in the work we share with you in the U.N., in the CSCE and in other multilateral forums. As the CSCE Final Act and the Madrid Document make clear, human rights are an essential factor in building the good relations among us that we all desire.

I do not say these things to suggest Canadians are somehow unique in wanting to promote and protect their own rights, or those of others. In all our countries one can find the same interests and concerns to one degree or another, or in one form or another. Rather, I am making the point that Canada sought this meeting because of the deep and abiding interest of its citizens in furthering human rights and because of the influence respect for human rights inevitably has on the search for improved cooperation among the CSCE states.

As you live among us for the next eight weeks, I invite you to talk to individual Canadians and to follow our media. I believe you will come to see that concern for human rights permeates my country.

Here in Canada, there are many people who have followed closely our domestic preparations for the experts meeting, who have expressed their concerns to the Government in consultations and in carefully drafted letters and briefs, and who have made known their hopes that the meeting should lead to productive results. No doubt there are many men and