

It is Canada's position that economic and political reform in Central America is desirable, indeed necessary. But change must be accomplished by peaceful means, and without outside interference.

The convergence in Central America of our own human rights concerns with our developmental and security objectives, has made the region a focus of attention in our foreign policy. In 1981 and 1982, Parliament gave unprecedented attention to El Salvador and its neighbours. The Government announced in 1982 the tripling, on an annual basis, of our development assistance to the region. We appointed a resident Ambassador in Guatemala to strengthen our capacity to pursue Canadian interests, including our representations on human rights and on other issues of concern. We also increased the staffing of our Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica for political reporting and development assistance purposes.

But we must be realistic. Our capacity to achieve our human rights objectives through bilateral means in situations of virtual civil war is limited. We have found that the multilateral arena offers the best opportunity for the pursuit of our goals in this area.

Only last week, at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, the Canadian delegation sought to secure the adoption of a resolution intended to focus attention on the human rights situation in El Salvador while avoiding extraneous political considerations. We were very nearly successful. In the process we demonstrated the enormous difficulty of securing international consensus on a balanced approach to a complex issue.

We seek to avoid the politicization of humanitarian issues. But the problems of Central America are not purely humanitarian in their nature. There are East-West and Hemispheric political considerations in play. There is outside interference, even though it is not the only cause of the present difficulties.

As we pursue a range of objectives in that region - humanitarian, economic, developmental and security - we must be faithful to the principles that motivate our foreign policy, and we must be honest in our estimation of what we can achieve. Rhetorical gestures are no credit to Canada, and no benefit to the people of Central America.

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Mr. Chairman, in my remarks I have touched on but a few of the many issues of concern in Canada's foreign policy. The members of the Committee will identify many more. I look forward to your questions.