

HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada is party to 22 of the 34 treaties in the human rights field of the United Nations. Treaties include covenants, conventions and protocols. Of these, Canada is party to seven of the eight major instruments. These are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada is not party to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty.

In addition to the treaties adopted by the United Nations, there are also a number of other human rights instruments. These include declarations, standard minimum rules, bodies of principle and so forth. For example, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has devoted a large part of its work to the human dimension, starting with the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The Copenhagen Document is the final document in a series devoted to human rights standards. While these instruments are not legally binding, they do set a basic minimum standard which states are expected to strive to achieve.

Canadian Reports under UN Human Rights Conventions

Under a number of UN human rights treaties, Canada is required to submit periodic reports on the measures taken to implement its obligations. Canada's second report under the ICESCR was submitted to the ICESCR Committee in October 1991. Our second report under the ICCPR was considered by the UN Human Rights Committee in November of 1990. The next report is due in 1994. The ninth and tenth reports under the Convention on the Elimination of of Racial Discrimination were considered in March 1991 by the CERD Committee, and the eleventh report was submitted in November 1991. The third report under CEDAW was submitted to the UN in September of 1992. Consideration of this report by the CEDAW Committee is not expected until 1994. Canada's second report under the Convention Against Torture was submitted in September 1992 and will be considered by the Committee against Torture in 1993. Canada will be submitting its first report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child in early 1994.

Draft Instruments

Several human rights instruments are currently under consideration by various UN bodies. A working group of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), has been meeting since 1978 on a declaration on the rights of minorities. In February 1992 the CHR