

Canada joins others in appealing to the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea to cooperate with UN human rights institutions. We are aware of North Korea's difficulty in feeding its population and are among those trying to help the North Korean people. But that situation, however serious, does not justify ongoing human rights violations.

In this debate, concerns are frequently voiced over selectivity. This is indeed a serious problem: states must respect all of their human rights obligations, without exception; the United Nations cannot condone a selective approach to the recognition or protection of particular rights or freedoms.

Canada is encouraged by the level of dialogue it has developed together with Cuba in recent months. However, as we have frequently stated, we remain concerned about the lack of respect for the civil and political rights of Cuba's citizens. This was illustrated this summer by the treatment of independent journalists in Cuba, and the arrests of four human rights activists.

We have been disappointed by the new Iranian government's inaction on human rights issues. We had hoped to see more progress in implementation of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, and an end to the government's discriminatory policies. We urge the Iranian government to take seriously the report of Professor Amor and to respect the religious freedom of the Bahais and other groups, as well as to engage more fully in cooperation with the Special Representative on Iran.

In Afghanistan, where extremely serious human rights violations continue, we condemn the intolerable restrictions imposed on the rights of women, including on their access to employment, health care, and education. Canada calls on all Afghan factions to respect Afghanistan's international commitments on human rights and to cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission to achieve a peaceful settlement.

There are states who argue that they must suppress human rights in order to foster stability and economic development. Nothing could be further from the truth. Respect for human rights is a vital factor in building the rule of law, which is at the heart of long term stability and sustainable growth. Economies may grow in spite of a poor human rights environment, but they will never grow because of one, nor reach their full potential when basic freedoms are curtailed.

Canada recognizes the great strides China has made in recent years in improving the living standards of its people. We nevertheless remain concerned that a greater effort be made by China to respect freedom of speech, of religion and of peaceful dissent, both throughout the country and in Tibet in particular. We welcome China's recent signature of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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