

human rights situations of two of these countries in this Committee, but we also need to confront the barriers--political, military and developmental--which will continue to frustrate full enjoyment of human rights unless they too are seriously addressed. Canada has therefore continued to increase its aid program and given full support to recent efforts of the Central American countries to bring peace, and stability to the region. We applaud the fact that human rights and democratization are prominent among the concerns which all of these states are now confronting. In keeping with our commitment to helping the neediest, Canada has recently announced the resumption of bilateral aid to Guatemala, a country which we hope will continue to make progress in the field of human rights.

There is a special point which calls for emphasis here, and it concerns the capacity of this organization to respond effectively and constructively to human rights abuses. The United Nations will always be a forum for bringing international public opinion to bear on governments that fail to meet their international human rights obligations. At the same time we must take constructive action to assist, especially in those states emerging from catastrophic situations and seeking to reverse years of institutional damage and human rights violations. The potential for such action can be found in the UN Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services. Its realization will depend on donor states, and those states which are willing to work with the Centre for Human Rights in addressing human rights violations within their own country.

As we address questions of human rights in this Committee, amidst crisis and enduring conflict, it is often difficult to measure the results of our efforts. One hopeful sign, however, is the attention that human rights is now gaining as a fundamental principle of domestic and international law. Human rights must be considered in bilateral visits, in multilateral discussion in a variety of fora, and in the agendas of regional organizations. There is, therefore, grounds for optimism that we are moving inexorably toward the noble goals of the UN charter. Canada believes that the gap between principle and practice, will be narrowed if we can but mobilize the political will.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.