

In 1945, the United Nations Charter was adopted, enshrining human rights both as a basic objective of the organization and as a universal obligation. Article 55 of the Charter states that the United Nations shall promote "human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion". Article 56 obliges member countries "to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the (United Nations)" to achieve these purposes.

In 1946, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights was established, followed in 1948 by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a basic - though non-binding - declaration of principles of human rights and freedoms. This was followed by the Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the preparation of two separate human rights covenants - one on political and civil rights and the other covering economic, social, and cultural rights (both adopted by the United Nations in 1966).

All this to say that there is sound international (and, important for a North Pacific audience, pre-CSCE) precedent for discussing human rights in a multilateralist framework. (More recently this has been a subject for discussion in the Commonwealth, the OAS, and la Francophonie.) The key would be initially limiting discussion to those areas which all North Pacific countries agree, avoiding the nebulous area of, as a Chinese scholar at Victoria termed it, "cultural infringement", in favour of "people-to-people" contacts and exchanges and cultural interaction.

It is argued here that the issues of human rights and environmental concerns be treated separately within the NPCSD, and that priority be given to developing the environmental dialogue. This would avoid the appearance of developing a "basket three" approach which, in turn, would lead to charges of attempting to impose a CSCE-style agenda on the North Pacific. Human rights issues are a legitimate concern of the NPCSD and, as has been illustrated, there are precedents and structures in place which would allow for a sub-regional multilateral dialogue.

III The Geographic and Two-Track Rationales

This paper accepts the definition of Asia Pacific as comprising four sub-regions. Consultative arrangements exist in South Asia through the (admittedly imperfect) South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation - SAARC; in South East Asia through the Association of South East Asian Nations - ASEAN - and the ASEAN-Post Ministerial Conference; and in the South Pacific through the emerging South Pacific Forum. In the North Pacific, where there is a significant concentration of conventional and nuclear forces, which is not fully represented in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation process (APEC), and where growing instability - centred on but not exclusive to the Korean peninsula - would have an adverse global political, economic, social and environmental effects, there is no