

Canada has made its own special contribution to the political experience of humanity. We have demonstrated that individual freedom and national independence need not be the product of violent revolution. They can be won gradually and peacefully without sundering the voluntary ties with those with whom we share a common heritage. We have also learned by experience, occasionally bitter experience, that a nation can be built only through tolerance of different traditions and points of view, respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings, the protection of laws, and a determination to promote liberty and equality.

Canada's contributions to the growth of international respect for human rights have been anchored in these fundamental lessons of our own history.

Canada has played an active and, at times, crucial role in the development of international law in human rights. A Canadian drafted the universal declaration of human rights. Its adoption in 1948 was an event of profound significance setting in motion the development of a comprehensive international legal framework for the protection of human rights. Canada is a party to the two human rights covenants and to a host of UN and ILO treaties and conventions touching on human rights. By ratifying the optional protocol to the international covenant on civil and political rights, Canada, along with many other countries, has gone the limit in recognizing the right of individuals to plead in the court of international opinion against violations of human rights by their governments.

Our quest for the promotion of human rights has been and continues to be global. It is an objective that we have pursued bilaterally and through our membership in a vast network of multilateral organizations.

Last week, in Dakar, Senegal, as a result of a Canadian initiative, the Summit conference of La Francophonie adopted, for the first time in history, a resolution committing all its members "to call for the respect of human rights as well as respect for the right to development both within and outside our community."

Within the Commonwealth Canada has been at the centre of the battle against the institutionalized evil of South African apartheid.