

Although the political will required to achieve general and complete disarmament has been absent, the arms-control measures so far achieved have not been negligible. It can be expected that those aspects of arms control that directly affect the strategic interests of the great powers (such as limiting the development of strategic arms) will continue to be dealt with outside the UN system, but that the United Nations General Assembly and related bodies such as the CCD will pursue the negotiation of arms-control agreements in such areas as the prohibition of nuclear testing, chemical and environmental methods of warfare and the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

C. Human rights and racial discrimination

Since 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly, the United Nations has been a major international force in defining fundamental human rights and combating racism and racial discrimination. Through the UN Commission on Human Rights, a series of important international legal instruments has been created, among which the following came into force in early 1976: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the latter's related Optional Protocol. These instruments reaffirm principles contained in the Universal Declaration, define new ideals for the attainment of other basic social rights, and establish procedures designed to promote compliance with their provisions.

After thorough consultations with the provinces, which share jurisdiction in human rights matters, Canada acceded to the two Covenants and the Optional Protocol on May 19, 1976. Besides serving as a further protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms for all Canadians, accession to these instruments will enable Canada to participate in establishing new international mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights around the world. Canada's involvement in UN human rights bodies has included recent terms on the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and Canada is currently serving a three-year term on the Commission on Human Rights, to which it was elected at the fifty-eighth session of ECOSOC in 1975. A Canadian, Professor Walter S. Tarnopolsky, was recently elected to a four-year term on the Human Rights Committee established under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In its early years, the United Nations, through the Commission on Human Rights, concentrated on the important tasks of defining concepts of human rights and of elaborating international instruments. As these tasks have largely been accomplished by the many covenants and declarations that have already been prepared and adopted, the Canadian Government believes that the United Nations should now be directing its energies towards protecting recognized rights through the utilization or establishment of workable international mechanisms that would, among other things, investigate individual communications alleging violations of human rights, create special groups of enquiry, and examine periodic reports of member states of the UN.

Some progress has been achieved in establishing monitoring and investigative mechanisms, particularly through the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women and the creation of committees of experts that examine periodic reports under the authority of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the