

In 1993, the World Conference on Human Rights formally acknowledged the contribution of NGOs to the promotion and protection of human rights at the national, regional and international levels.<sup>5</sup> At the UN level, various arrangements (currently under review) do exist for NGO participation. Through oral or written statements, as well as the submission of information regarding allegations of human rights violations, NGOs have made a substantial contribution, in particular, to the work of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council directly concerned with human rights.<sup>6</sup> In addition, NGOs are allowed to take part in the work of a number of treaty-based organs, notably by submitting counter-reports to the official reports of state parties.<sup>7</sup>

In Canada, formal policy statements acknowledge the important contribution of NGOs to the international advancement of human rights. The Foreign Affairs Minister, speaking at the NGO Global Forum on the Five-Year Review of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, held in Ottawa in 1998, spoke in glowing terms of a “new kind of coalition”, united in the defence of international human rights around “a common set of core principles”. The “new diplomacy” of human rights, he told the Forum, was based on a “partnership of equals” between “like-minded governments and civil society”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*, General Assembly Document A/CONF.157/23, 12 July 1993, para. 38.

<sup>6</sup> NGOs have been particularly involved in the work of the Commission on Human Rights, the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. See: SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, *Arrangements and Practices for the Interaction of Non-governmental Organizations in All Activities of the United Nations System*, General Assembly Document A/53/170, 10 July 1998, para. 8.

<sup>7</sup> On the reporting process generally, see: UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, *Manual on Human Rights Reporting*, UN Document HR/PUB/91/1 (1992). Six organs are currently responsible for the examination of state reports under various human rights instruments. Five are treaty-based: the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The sixth organ, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, was created pursuant to a resolution of the Economic and Social Council.

<sup>8</sup> Quoting notes for an address by The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy to the NGO Global Forum on the Five-Year Review of the Vienna Conference on Human Rights, Ottawa, 23 June 1998 (<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/news/statements/98>).