

It can constitute a solid foundation for further progress in the search for human rights, stability and security in Europe.

Especially welcome will be two new negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe, and a separate ongoing conference - on the human dimension - to deal with human rights and related issues. The Concluding Document will contain substantial new commitments in human rights, including religious freedoms, freedom of movement, the right to promote and protect human rights, and the rights of minorities. As well it will bring a range of measures to reduce bureaucratic obstacles to emigration and travel, and freer information flows including telephone and postal communications.

On human rights, the progress made by the USSR has been impressive during the two years since the Vienna Meeting began. In 1986 Canada had 42 outstanding family reunification cases with the Soviet Union. By the end of 1988 these were reduced to 11, of which 7 are being settled. We are assured by the USSR that efforts are being made to resolve the remaining cases as quickly as possible. Emigration figures have increased dramatically: some 3,500 Jewish emigrants in December alone, most of them to Israel. In recent months many long-term refuseniks have been given exit permission. Hundreds of political prisoners have been released, including all the original Helsinki monitors, and there have been no new arrests or incarcerations under the explicitly religious and political articles of the criminal code. Jamming of Western radio by East European countries has ceased. There has been greater freedom of speech, minorities have been given greater scope for self-expression, and religious groups enjoy greater tolerance.

We are also encouraged by Mr. Gorbachev's pledge before the United Nations that this progress would continue, that reforms would be permanently reflected in legislation and practice, and that in coming years the Soviet Union would evolve into a society increasingly governed by the rule of law and respectful of the rights of all its citizens.

Overall, these developments have convinced us that the Moscow Meeting could contribute positively to further progress in human rights in the USSR and eastern Europe. If negotiations now underway with the Soviets are resolved, as we expect they would be, Canada would attend this meeting.