

CANADIAN POSITION

A lasting peace settlement is a necessary precondition for ending Afghanistan's human tragedy. Since we have not had diplomatic relations with any régime in Kabul since the Soviet invasion in 1979, Canada's direct influence in Afghanistan is limited. Nevertheless, the Canadian Government, through its High Commission in Islamabad, closely monitors the situation, and consults with the UN Special Mission, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organizations with respect to the promotion of a peaceful settlement and the alleviation of the human rights situation. We view the UN Special Mission as the best mechanism for achieving peace. Canada last year seconded an officer to the UN Mission in Afghanistan for six months.

The Canadian Government is deeply troubled, as is the international community, by the serious human rights violations in Afghanistan, especially the grave deterioration in women's rights in areas under Taliban control. Canada strongly supports the actions by the UN and its agencies to persuade the Taliban authorities to respect Afghanistan's international obligations on human rights. In this regard, the UN Secretary General took the unusual step of issuing a statement on Afghanistan's human rights situation, UN agencies subsequently issued a statement of operating principles, and Canada has been participating in a donors' group to apply universally-accepted principles to their respective assistance programs in Afghanistan. The UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1076 in October 1996 which, inter alia, called for a negotiated settlement and denounced discrimination against Afghan women and girls. The UN General Assembly Third Committee resolution, adopted by consensus last November, placed particular emphasis on violations of women's human rights.

Canada continues to be one of the major donors supporting relief operations in Afghanistan. Since 1992/93 Canada has approved humanitarian aid of C\$28.4 million, including \$5.5 million for 1995/96. The principal activities, provided through UN agencies, are demining, health, assistance to displaced persons and repatriation. In addition, Canadian emergency food aid since 1993/94 has amounted to \$22.9 million through the World Food Program.

The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan was extended for one year by the CHR during its last session, and will likely be extended again this year, given the overall lack of progress.