

PREFACE

BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Called "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations", the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, was a landmark achievement. The Declaration embodies the fundamental rights of the individual human being and has served as a touchstone for all human rights activity in the last 50 years.

The 50th anniversary of the Declaration, commemorated throughout the world in 1998, was a chance for members of the international community to reaffirm their commitment to human rights. It was also a chance for states, non-governmental organizations, the international community and individuals to take stock of how far we have come from the first heady days of the UDHR, and how far we have to go.

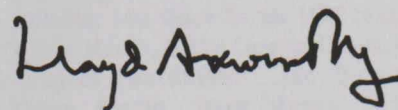
For Canada, the concept of human rights has become an essential element in diplomacy and policy-making. Over the last 50 years, we have developed an impressive array of international human rights instruments and mechanisms to monitor their implementation. And we continue to do so. Two outstanding examples from 1998 are the adoption of the "Defenders Declaration", initiated 13 years ago by Canada and Norway, and the Statute of the International Criminal Court, a major step forward in the battle against impunity.

Our reflections throughout this year have also brought home the fact that the challenge of universal human rights is far from met. While most governments recognize that human rights should be respected, grave violations continue throughout the world, evidence that the universality of human rights is not yet accepted nor realized everywhere.

The struggle to achieve the goals set for us in the Universal Declaration is one that everyone can and should embrace. In that struggle, the importance of being well-informed cannot be overestimated. That is why I am pleased to have been able to join in partnership with civil society for a second time to produce *For the Record 1998: The United Nations Human Rights System*.

Based solely on UN documents, this report provides in one place all the relevant information about the human rights situation in every country around the world as discussed and examined in the United Nations. Its intent is to simplify, encourage and improve human rights policy-making. It provides a concise, readily available information and reference source to researchers, academics, civil servants, diplomats, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists and others who work to promote and protect universal human rights.

In 1998 the international community reaffirmed its commitment to promote and protect human rights. We must do all that we can to ensure that the progress of the last 50 years continues to move us forward.



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