

only in a few situations, where the UN majority considered that the political situation as well as the human rights situation warranted action.

Nonetheless, there have been signs in the past year that the UN majority may be coming to accept that it is important to take action in situations of gross and persistent violence to individuals and groups. This was shown by the decision of two developing countries of the Commonwealth to pilot through the General Assembly last year a very significant resolution on human rights. That resolution placed emphasis on the belief that the achievement of lasting progress on civil and political rights was dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of development. But it stipulated that all human rights were nonetheless indivisible and inalienable. The initiative was influenced by the Commonwealth Heads of Government action the preceeding June to single out Uganda as a serious violator of human rights. The Commonwealth action was, I might add, the result of Prime Minister Trudeau's determination that the Commonwealth could not employ a double standard. While condemning the abhorrent system of apartheid in South Africa, it could not overlook the odious practices of the Ugandan regime.

In line with the promising trend of increasing third world involvement, the Human Rights Commission this year took in-camera decisions relating to situations in nine different countries. It set a significant precedent by making public the fact that some action vis-a-vis these nine countries was in progress. Though a small beginning, these developments are commendable. Only as such actions become less exceptional will an international climate of opinion be established permitting the systematic examination of gross violations on an apolitical basis.

When should human rights situations involve Canada more directly?

I turn now to the question of when and in what manner the Canadian Government should intercede when human rights are being violated in other countries. The question is not easily answered. No country has an unblemished human rights record.