

Being effective on such questions requires that we keep the lines of communications open through forums such as this one. This consultation each January, as well as attendance by officials at the Network on International Human Rights meetings in the spring and prior to the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, are all important opportunities to ensure free and open dialogue continues between the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the NGO community. They must remain meaningful elements of our consultative process.

Opportunities exist for increased partnership in communication and education. Let us work together to raise the profile of Canadian NGOs within Canada so that Canadians have an increased understanding of your role and impact, and an increased familiarity of the concept of human rights and why it is so vital that human rights are protected.

While inspiration for Canadian foreign policy will continue to flow from the purposes of the United Nations and human rights must remain in the forefront of all UN activities, I ask you to remember the decision made on October 25, 1993. On that day, Canadians made an overwhelming statement about the need for economic renewal and growth. A Liberal government was elected because of our clear commitment to ending the unemployment crisis in Canada, along with our concrete ideas on how to accomplish this task.

International trade will play an important role in the stimulation of the Canadian economy but that does not mean that Canada's standards on human rights need to be sacrificed. There doesn't need to be a contradiction between economic expansion and human rights. Indeed, we can have an effective influence on a country's internal policy by urging our trading partners to uphold the values of the United Nations.

The relationship between Canada's economic interests and its human rights concerns is among the issues that should be considered in the foreign review process and upon which your input will be sought. The relationship between human rights and our development assistance objectives will also be considered. In my view, Canadian assistance toward the creation of an environment for sustainable development should contribute to the protection of human rights and to good government. Again, the involvement of the NGO community is of the utmost importance.

Our foreign policy challenge is to address international concerns in a fashion which fits into the Liberal government's agenda and represents the values of Canadians. I am hoping that the next three days of consultation will assist the Canadian government in meeting that challenge. With your help, I am sure we will succeed.