

Several human rights instruments are currently under consideration by various UN bodies. Since 1984, a working group of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has been charged with the elaboration of a declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. The next session of the working group is scheduled for January 1992. A CHR working group has also been meeting since 1978 on a declaration on the rights of minorities. At its last session, the working group commenced a second reading of the draft declaration. It is expected that the working group will conclude its work at a special session in 1991 and that it will recommend to the CHR the adoption of the draft declaration.

The CHR, at its last session in 1991, approved the establishment of another working group to review and recommend for adoption a draft declaration on the disappeared. The draft was originally elaborated in the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The working group will meet prior to the commencement of the CHR in January 1992. The Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Sub-Commission is currently drafting a declaration on indigenous rights. A text is expected to be submitted to the CHR for consideration in 1993, the UN Year of the Indigenous.

Organization of American States

The Organization of American States (OAS), which Canada joined in 1990, has a long history of activity in the field of human rights. The most important instruments are the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the American Convention on Human Rights. The former, while not legally binding, serves as an interpretative guide to the human rights obligation of member states under the OAS Charter. The American Convention is a binding instrument that not only elaborates basic human rights and fundamental freedoms but also establishes important implementing mechanisms such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The federal government is currently consulting with the provinces and territories concerning possible adherence to this instrument.

The OAS also has a number of other human rights instruments and continues to adopt new ones where a need is demonstrated. Canada is taking measures to effect adherence to three conventions on the rights of women. Other instruments to be examined include an OAS convention against torture. Canada is actively involved in the elaboration by the OAS of a new convention on the disappeared.