

and freedoms. And finally, we have initiated a study that seeks to analyze the causes of certain human rights abuses, in the hope of preventing their recurrence.

On the first front — the development of new international instruments — the General Assembly last December unanimously adopted the Declaration Against All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. This declaration, 20 years in the making, spells out in detail the right to freedom of religion that was first enunciated in general terms in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When the Declaration on Religious Intolerance was finally adopted, a number of delegations paid tribute to the important role played by Canada in the elaboration of this instrument.

Again in December of last year, Canada ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. We were one of the principal drafters and supporters of this convention, and a Canadian has been elected to sit on the committee that will monitor its implementation.

Canada is also actively participating in a working group that is elaborating a draft convention against torture. I am optimistic that the working group will submit a final draft of the convention to the Human Rights Commission in the very near future. The terrible practice of torture cannot be allowed to go unpunished. We have pressed hard to ensure that the convention, when it emerges, will include a provision on universal jurisdiction. Such a provision would allow the prosecution of a torturer in any state, regardless of his nationality, the nationality of his victim, or the place where the torture occurred.

On the second front I mentioned a few minutes ago, Canada recently sponsored an initiative focusing on the right and responsibility of individuals and groups to promote existing human rights and freedoms. This initiative was adopted at the last session of the Human Rights Commission. We hope that a declaration on this subject will help to deter countries from punishing their citizens for merely asserting rights embodied in universally accepted instruments. We hope too that the declaration will better enable organizations such as the International Commission of Jurists to carry out their mandates.

Disappearances

I should also mention here the important activities of the UN Working Group on the Disappeared — a dreadful new concept that has entered our modern vocabulary. This working group embodies many of the aims of Canadian foreign policy in the field of human rights. It attempts to deal with the problem of disappearances on a generic basis by attacking it wherever it occurs, without singling out individual countries for special consideration. The working group has carried out its mandate in a manner that has been commended even by some of the countries under investigation. Most important of all, it has proven itself effective and has reported on more than 2 100 missing persons in 22 different countries. The working group has also established an emergency procedure — the first of its kind within the UN — which authorizes the