

persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities". This work has been delayed because there has been no agreed definition of what constitutes a minority. I admit this is a difficult matter and I shall not try my hand at it now. Two distinguished participants in this Conference, Professor Capotorti and Judge Deschênes, have made important contributions to framing such a definition, and I understand that the U.N. Sub-Commission will be discussing the conclusions of this work at its meeting in August.

I wonder if in this process we might not get rid of the word "minority" itself, which seems to me to denote something second class, and is not generally acceptable to those groups who wish to retain their special identity. Perhaps the first right of a minority should be not to be called a minority. I have always preferred the term "community", which stresses the bond within the group, rather than the arithmetic of their situation.

One challenge is to define minority rights, and identify cases where they are not respected. The other challenge is to find practical ways to secure those rights, or stop their abuse. All of us must respond to both challenges, but the special responsibility of government is to find practical ways to solve particular problems. Those problems are themselves diverse. By way of example, let me report on some of the minority rights questions before our particular Government now.

Our Government has introduced historic legislation to amend the Indian Act that will end discrimination based on sex and will give Indian bands control of their membership. As I said in the House of Commons on March 1 -- it marks a large step away from a colonial mentality that has scarred the relations between Indian and other Canadians and marks a step -- just a step, but an important one -- toward greater autonomy for Indian bands. It proceeds in a way that is simultaneously reasonable, tolerant and principled to resolve dilemmas that have been divisive at home and embarrassing abroad.

The Constitution Act, 1982 recognized for the first time rights unique to the aboriginal peoples. It not only affirmed existing aboriginal and treaty rights, but also provided for an unprecedented constitutional process in which First Ministers and aboriginal leaders would participate in discussions to identify and define further