

Mr. Chairman,

One of the instruments that Canada believes is vital to the protection of human rights is the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Canada ratified the Convention in 1987 and next week will present its initial report to the UN Committee Against Torture. I have the honour and pleasure to announce today that Canada has submitted to the United Nations, its declarations in respect of Articles 21 and 22 of the Convention, accepting the inter-state and individual complaint mechanisms. I believe that the making of these declarations is a critical step in Canada's continuing commitment to developing and adhering to effective procedures aimed at rooting out human rights abuses. In this regard, I reiterate Canada's traditional plea for other states to consider taking similar steps under the Convention Against Torture, as well as other UN human rights instruments. Our own extensive experience with the UN monitoring bodies has confirmed our view that they exist not to criticize, but to assist in pointing out certain problems and working with the states concerned to develop solutions to ensure more effective protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Those of us who work with the United Nations in the field of human rights are often asked whether our efforts are in vain, since abuses persist in all parts of the world. My response, which is one that I firmly believe in, is that we do make a difference. I believe that the ground-laying work we have done is fundamental to the building of strong structures based on peace and respect for human rights. That is what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenants and the other UN human rights standards are all about. It is for this reason that my delegation strongly urges all states to support continued UN action in this field. This year, in particular, I urge all states to support a major development in the UN's work - the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.