

the UN needs credible mechanisms to respond to human rights abuses around the world. The appointment of José Ayala-Lasso as High Commissioner for Human Rights is a historic step forward in this regard, and I welcome his presence in our midst today. This week, Prime Minister the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien and I had the opportunity to talk with the High Commissioner and to reiterate Canada's support for him. We mentioned the need to strengthen the key role of the UN's entire human rights system in early warning and prevention of human rights abuses.

Mechanisms for protecting human rights - including the Commission on Human Rights, its special reporters, its working groups, and the committees supervising the application of treaties relating to human rights - regularly produce a wealth of useful analyses and information that can help us to identify the first signs of a possible conflict and to respond accordingly. We must ensure an appropriate link between the work of the High Commissioner and that of the Security Council.

Mr. Ayala-Lasso, I wish to assure you of Canada's unwavering support for your efforts to promote and protect human rights. These efforts are relevant to the activities of the United Nations as a whole, whether they involve peacekeeping, security, preventive diplomacy, humanitarian assistance or development.

### **Regional Action**

When we talk of reforming the United Nations, we must also consider ways and means to strengthen the role of regional organizations in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. For example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] - formerly known as the CSCE - has developed a number of innovative instruments and mechanisms for addressing the root causes of conflicts, building security through military transparency and confidence-building measures, and promoting human rights and democracy in Europe. Canada will continue to work to enhance the OSCE as a regional complement to the UN's global efforts in peace and security.

Canada is also spearheading a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening co-operation with La Francophonie, the Organization of African Unity [OAU], the Commonwealth and others. A few months ago, the Prime Minister told the French Senate that La Francophonie must strengthen its capacity for political intervention and establish a mechanism for preventive diplomacy. At the Francophone Ministers' Conference in Ouagadougou, I proposed that a meeting be organized and held in Canada, in co-operation with the UN and the OAU, to define a prevention process that would be tabled at the upcoming summit in Cotonou.

If we build on the assets of organizations and the political will of governments, success lies within our grasp. Haiti is a good