

Canada's concerns led to our launching an international initiative three years ago in the Commission on Human Rights. This was at the time of the mass expulsions of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, which had created a humanitarian crisis of unprecedented proportions due to a flagrant and massive abuse of human rights by Vietnam. The initiative was designed to focus the attention of the international community on the relationship between human rights violations and massive exoduses of refugees. This initiative led last year to the appointment by the UN of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, a distinguished former High Commissioner for Refugees, to conduct a study into this question. This report has involved wide consultations with governments and international agencies. It could provide insights into how the UN and member states can together prevent refugee situations from reaching existing proportions by eliminating most causes. It is due to be tabled before the Commission on Human Rights this month and we hope will be a first step towards dealing with this difficult problem.

Simultaneously, at the UN General Assembly, a resolution of the Federal Republic of Germany, supported and co-sponsored by Canada, initiated a move to look at ways and means of improving the international community's ability to avert flows of refugees. As a result, a Group of Experts is being formed at the United Nations which will consider this question, and examine the feasibility of internationally-acceptable guidelines to accomplish this goal.

As the underlying causes of many refugee situations are political in nature, so must a realistic approach to dealing with them take account of political factors. The beneficial effects for refugees of successfully tackling such problems can be impressive. I am reminded, for example, of the negotiated settlement to the war in Zimbabwe, which was followed by the successful repatriation of virtually all Zimbabwean refugees.

Canada, in its response to refugee situations, has not ignored this important aspect. For example, as a member of the Contact Group of five Western powers, we have been intensively involved in negotiations to achieve independence for Namibia on internationally-acceptable principles. Such a settlement would, among other things, permit the many Namibian refugees to return to their homes. To take another example, I attended in 1981 the International Conference on Kampuchea, held under the auspices of the UN. This conference, which has an ongoing role under its President, is attempting to induce the parties in this conflict to negotiate a settlement. We have strongly supported this conference, which if successful, would bring a measure of stability to Kampuchea and thus permit a return of Kampuchean refugees.