

sioned young of the former Soviet Union combined to convince me that the two sets of rights are organically connected and that neither can be fully realized without the other.

After the end of the Cold War frozen attitudes melted and there was a positive shift in the language of human rights. It was not by accident, therefore, that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which integrates both sets of rights in one document, was ratified so rapidly. Now that there was no longer a political price to pay for linking the two sets of rights, children could be described as persons whose civil rights need economic, social and cultural support and whose growth into responsible citizenship requires opportunities to learn and to make choices. While the implications of the Convention's articles are still unfolding there is no doubt that its nearly universal ratification has brought children's rights permanently onto the international political agenda. Around the world, nations are building the Convention into their laws, sometimes right into their constitutions. They are establishing children's commissioners and designing action plans for respecting children's rights. Issues such as child labour, children in zones of conflict, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and discrimination against girls have become visible as never before. Children are now discussed at all kinds of international meetings where governments are represented. Even trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, with its side agreement on child labour, have begun to take children into account.

Canada, traditionally a strong proponent of human rights, has taken leadership in this movement. We began work on the Convention under a Liberal government and ratified it under the Conservatives. Former Prime Minister Mulroney co-chaired the World Summit for Children in 1990. On their return to power in 1993, the Liberals explicitly made children's rights a foreign policy concern. This was stated in *Canada and the World*, the document the Government released in February 1995 in response to the report of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee reviewing Canadian foreign policy. *Canada and the World* lists three foreign policy objectives: (1) the promotion of prosperity and employment; (2) the protection of our security within a stable global framework; and (3) the projection of Canadian values and cul-