

important role to play. Canada will participate at an OSCE seminar on the subject in Vienna on March 22 to consider next steps.

We will also continue to pursue our bilateral efforts. To that end, I am pleased to note that China has indicated its willingness to host a visit by a Canadian delegation to engage in a dialogue on issues of religious freedom. Member churches of the Canadian Council of Churches, in conjunction with their Chinese partners, are discussing options for such a continued dialogue.

2. **Using information technology.** From Bosnia to Burma, the information superhighway is making it possible to advance human rights objectives.

Last fall, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [DFAIT] organized an NGO [non-governmental organization] forum on the Internet and human rights. We are turning our attention now to how information technology, as well as improved networking, better reporting and enhanced information gathering, can all be developed and used more specifically as instruments to promote religious freedom. I am pleased to announce today that DFAIT is prepared to devote resources for this purpose. I would welcome your ideas about how we can work in partnership to that end.

3. **Involving and mobilizing Canadians.** The engagement of Canadians and Canadian civil society is essential in promoting religious tolerance around the world.

The advice and views from individuals and groups such as yourselves will be important in determining the government's priorities. To that end, many of you participated in a roundtable discussion on freedom of religion and religious intolerance organized two weeks ago by DFAIT. You are meeting today under the auspices of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development for further reflection. The recommendations made two weeks ago and your discussions today will be helpful in moving forward.

Religious beliefs are ultimately an intensely personal matter. Consequently, while governments have a role in promoting religious freedom abroad, this responsibility must be shared by individuals, NGOs and religious groups. Working through and mobilizing interest in our own parishes, temples and mosques, I am convinced that we can all make a contribution to advancing religious freedom beyond our borders. I would be interested to hear from you how we might work together in pursuing this objective.

The promotion of religious freedom is integral to full respect for human rights. Human rights are in turn the foundation for human security. Consequently, in pursuing our human security agenda, we must be engaged in fighting religious intolerance. I have outlined some of the ways we are doing this and the direction we intend to take. I look forward to hearing the conclusions of your discussions.

Thank you.

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