

Mr. Chairman,

On a recent visit to Canada, the Secretary-General observed that "Democracy is the best guarantee of peace". A number of situations that preoccupy the international community further underline the crucial relationship between genuine democracy and broader respect for human rights; others demonstrate that democratic elections, while a crucial measure, do not in and of themselves suffice to ensure full observance of fundamental rights and freedoms.

- The recent democratic elections in Pakistan are welcome, as is the new government's commitment to strengthening the democratic process and improving the human rights situation. We encourage the government to address a range of human rights problems reported by a number of credible human rights organisations.

- While Canada is encouraged by the improvement in respect for human rights in Vietnam over the past few years. Those seeking full expression of their political and religious beliefs continue to be treated harshly and are imprisoned under laws which do not guarantee due process. Such treatment of religious leaders and political activists remains a serious concern.

- Even though the human rights situation in China has improved since 1989, we are nevertheless concerned that a number of dissidents remain incarcerated for having voiced their opinions in a legitimate fashion. Equity and transparency are lacking in judicial proceedings. Also, we note a lack of improvement in the human rights situation in Tibet.

- Burundi had offered the inspiring example of an incumbent president accepting defeat at the polls and handing power smoothly to his elected successor. Most regrettably, the recent coup attempt and assassination of President Ndadaye, and the ensuing massacres have halted this short-lived democratic experiment. It must be resumed.

- One of the greatest disappointments of the past year was the annulment of Nigeria's presidential election, followed by the recent military takeover and dissolution of all democratic institutions created since 1988. Further military intervention cannot solve this crisis. We continue to call for a rapid resumption of the democratic process. Nigeria's place in Africa deserves no less.

- In Zaïre, credible reports from Amnesty International and others have documented numerous gross and systematic violations of human rights, more particularly in the provinces of Shaba, Kivu and Kasai, as well as impediments to democratic progress in the country as a whole. In 1994, the Commission on Human Rights should consider what further action would be appropriate to address the serious situation existing in Zaïre.

Mr. Chairman,

Some people claim that this debate has turned into a North-South ideological dispute. We don't believe this. Human rights are not the concern of any particular part of the world; every region has countries which are human rights defenders, as well as countries where there are serious human rights situations. In this context, I would like to make three brief observations:

- First, time does not permit here a detailed review of the progress towards greater respect for human rights in all parts of the world - Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. But an objective view of today's world clearly does not support the hypothesis that human rights constitutes a North-South divide.

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