

world situation and in the membership. The shift over the years towards economic and social priorities is therefore desirable and understandable. We hope that some restructuring of the economic and social sector of the UN will take place as a result. We see merit in proposals to give a more central role to the Economic and Social Council and for arrangements in the Secretariat designed to support this role. It is not too soon to envisage the Economic and Social Council in permanent session, taking up groups of issues in some orderly fashion and giving close attention to the implementation of decisions taken at UN special conferences. The recommendations of the Habitat conference, for example, of which Canada had the honour to act as host, require thorough and expert scrutiny.

We recognize as well that many members believe the Charter reflects better the world of 1945 than the world of today. We agree that useful changes might be made. But here, as in other matters, the best may be the enemy of the good. Canada takes the view that the present balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council, which is the central issue of the Charter reform, is preferable to any alternative. The question of the Council's membership may be debatable, but its powers and structure will serve us well. So too does the principle of equal rights in the General Assembly. If the UN is to evolve gradually into a body capable of making decisions which affect the vital interests of all states, it must follow procedures which give confidence to its members that these interests are secure.

Human Rights

The coming into force this year of the Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights is a major step forward for the UN. As a member of the Commission on Human Rights, Canada will now direct her efforts principally towards the protection of the rights defined in the Covenants and in the Declaration. One obvious means is to make effective the investigative and appeal mechanisms that are now established. These mechanisms require that states be willing to accept impartial examination of any alleged failures to abide by their commitments. A Court of Human Rights, as proposed by my German colleague, is a step we should consider. None of us have perfect records. To fall short of the aspirations inscribed in the Covenants and the Declaration on Human Rights is not a matter for partisan polemics but for sober assessment.

The obstacles ahead are formidable. Appeals against violations of human rights can be a threat to the legitimacy of some governments and an embarrassment to others. No state is immune to criticism in this regard, although some manage to deflect attention while others become the centre of attraction. Canada will speak out to the best of her knowledge without regard for power or favour. We attach particular importance to the full implementation of the terms of the Declaration on Torture which the General Assembly adopted in 1976.

Peace and Security

Our experience with peacekeeping has been different from our experience with human rights. The concepts and principles of UN peacekeeping have been the subject of strong disagreement, whereas the practice has been modestly successful.

Threats to peace and security vary from year to year but we are rarely able to claim that none exist. This year we have been shocked by the continuing loss of life in the Lebanon. The United Nations has not been able to contribute to peacemaking efforts there but should remain ready to respond if the situation so requires.

My Government agrees that the early independence of both Namibia and Rhodesia on the basis of majority rule and racial harmony is essential to the peace of Africa. It believes as well that South Africa must meet the legitimate political, social and economic demands of the majority of South Africans, supported by the virtually unanimous opinion of this Assembly, if such peace is to endure.

In the Middle East the UN has no choice but to continue the peacekeeping duties authorized by the Security Council. We were encouraged at this time last year by the interim agreement reached between Egypt and Israel on the withdrawal of their forces from Sinai. We look forward to further negotiations which could lead eventually to a peace settlement on the basis of the principles agreed by the Security Council in its Resolution 242, and which would take into account the legitimate concerns and interests of the Palestinian people. Whether negotiations are resumed bilaterally with the help of third party mediation or whether they take place multilaterally in the presence of all the parties directly affected is less important than a joint determination by the states concerned to accept the necessity of establishing and maintaining peaceful relations between them. Pending the achievement of this objective, Canada will continue to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations and will oppose actions or initiatives which