

the opportunity this year to respond to this challenge in two ways. First, my delegation has already had occasion under Item 11 to refer to the Commission's report to the Special Commission of ECOSOC. We hope this report will include some reference to the Sub-Commission's work and to the need for greater focus and clarity in its deliberations. Second, while the Commission has had occasion in past sessions to provide guidance to the Sub-Commission on its working methods, there would appear to be scope for greater precision in such directions, as well as for greater responsiveness on the part of the Sub-Commission. My delegation will be joining with others in proposing some specific measures to this end, and we hope that governments, NGOs and experts alike will continue to reflect on how the work of the Sub-Commission can best contribute to our shared objectives in the human rights field.

Mr. Chairman, the importance of priority-setting, efficient working methods and balanced decision-making can perhaps be illustrated by examining specific elements of the Sub-Commission's work. I propose to focus here on those portions of the Report concerning the Working Group on Indigenous Populations and I do so not only because of their illustrative value and prominence in this year's report but also because of the particular importance Canada attaches to this subject. Canada strongly supports the concept of this Working Group. We have recognized that indigenous populations are among the most economically disadvantaged and politically marginalized individuals and groups in many parts of the world. We are not ashamed to acknowledge that our special sensitivity to these issues is borne in good part out of our own national experience. However, nor do we hesitate to assert our belief that the approaches adopted in Canada, and the progress they have brought, place our country in the vanguard of national efforts to address the needs and aspirations of indigenous people.

More remains to be accomplished - in Canada as well as in other countries and regions in less fortunate economic and political circumstances. At the international level, there remain a great many important issues to be tackled and many of these are catalogued in the landmark Martinez Cobo Report. The problem of defining indigenous populations has yet to be resolved, almost twenty years after Martinez Cobo; and many indigenous populations continue to struggle for the mere recognition of their existence by their governments.