

Our clear objective must be to assist nations with their problems, rather than to meddle in their internal affairs. Lasting improvements must come from internal processes of accommodation in individual states, as a result of domestic decisions.

In seeking to promote such accommodation within individual states, the international community must rely on persuasion, through concerted political pressure mobilized in the United Nations and elsewhere.

You have assembled here experts and practitioners in the rights of minorities, a subject which has been suffering from neglect internationally. I am certain that the records and conclusions of this Conference will themselves be a significant contribution to the development of international standards and action. It will certainly give new, and timely, impetus to the consideration of this matter among nations. It is my intention that Canada contribute actively and compassionately to this work, from which we too will benefit within our own country.

Sometimes, at international conferences, Canada is celebrated for what we are not. We are not a superpower, not an imperial power, not an aggressive nation. But we are a country deeply involved with the rights of minorities. That issue was present at our beginning, with our two founding peoples, and before our beginning, with our aboriginal people.

Our future success as a nation, as with our past, will be determined by our treatment of this issue.

The challenges are Canadian and international. I am honoured to have the opportunity to discuss them here with you.

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