

Canada has played an effective role in expanding the capacity of the Commission to focus the collective political power of the United Nations on human rights violations. In addition to the continuing role of the Commission in establishing agreed international standards in human rights, a number of useful techniques have emerged to encourage compliance with these standards. The system of appointing Special Rapporteurs to liaise with, and report upon countries having difficulties is now firmly established, and its use is expanding. The Working Group on Disappearances, and the Special Rapporteur on Summary Executions are dealing effectively with particular issues on a global basis, and this technique has now been applied to torture. Although inescapably something of a mirror of the political realities in the world today, the Commission is undoubtedly proving to be an increasingly useful instrument. We must look for ways in which Canada might contribute to further increasing the influence of the Commission. This is one area in which the United Nations, in small incremental steps, is gathering strength, and the Canadian Government will lend its full support.

In addition to the Commission, and of course the General Assembly, there are other forums in which Canada will pursue its objectives. One month from now we shall be well into the first stages of the Human Rights Experts Meeting being held as part of the continuing process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This meeting is being held in Ottawa as a result of a Canadian initiative at the Madrid Follow-up Meeting, and reflects the high priority which Canadians have accorded to human rights throughout the CSCE process. It would be risky to predict how this first meeting devoted solely to human rights may develop, or what its outcome may be. It is our hope that it will make a real contribution to improving human rights, and that it will thus be a positive step in the long and complex process of improving relations among the participating states. Canada recognizes that human rights problems have been a significant impediment to better relations, and believes that a frank examination of these problems must be the basis for any eventual solutions. We intend to face squarely the difficult issues involved, but we and like-minded countries see no useful purpose in heated accusations. This realistic but determined approach appears to offer the most promise for making tangible progress at this meeting, and for pointing the way for future progress.