

as "man-made disasters", are only too well known. The depressing list of regional and national conflicts which have been in part responsible for refugee situations is long indeed. The mixture of natural and man-made disasters, which so often occurs, only compounds an already grim situation for refugees.

Some current examples will serve to illustrate these factors. In Indochina, for example, a complex mixture of factors has been at play. Years of regional instability and conflict, civil war, famine, the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Kampuchea and their expulsion of a large percentage of their own population have been responsible. In Afghanistan again, we see foreign invasion, in this case by the Soviets, as the chief cause. In the Horn of Africa, regional conflict in an already poor and arid land has been responsible for the terrible situation that exists there. In Central America, conflict and civil war have led to large numbers of refugees seeking shelter in neighbouring countries.

Apart from natural disasters, national and regional conflicts clearly play a major role. Increasingly -- especially in cases of mass movements of refugees -- we see a disturbing relationship between such situations and violations of human rights. Consideration of causes of these mass movements goes to the heart of some of the fundamental problems in the international arena today. Until now, the international community has failed to come to grips with this problem, and with each new refugee situation we have been doomed to react after the event.

The question of refugees and human rights violations is of particular concern to Canada. I believe we are well-placed to raise this matter internationally. Canada has a long and close involvement with the UNHCR; we are a major contributor to humanitarian assistance; our resettlement record in the last few years is, on a per capita basis, the best in the world. Concern for human rights has been an element of our foreign policy for decades. We have been a member of the UN Commission on Human Rights since 1976. In 1981, we were reelected for a third consecutive term, coming first in the balloting.

Over the years, either through humanitarian assistance or resettlement, Canada has responded emphatically to the persecutions of individuals and groups around the globe who have been forced to flee their homelands. The philosophical foundation of our refugee and human rights policies is identical: to bring relief to the victims and ensure their safety, security and basic human needs.