

To meet this fundamental test of translating standards into action, Canada has planned a number of forward-looking events to mark the 50th anniversary of the UDHR. From June 22 to 24 we will sponsor, in co-operation with an NGO consortium, a conference for NGOs [non-governmental organizations] from across the globe to review progress in implementing the VDPA [Vienna Declaration and Program of Action]. Our aim is to ensure that civil society is able to provide the strongest possible input into the UN's five-year review of the VDPA.

This conference will also mark the official unveiling of a major implementation initiative that Canada has funded: a global human rights report based solely on information from UN sources, organized by country and by theme. We believe that this will be an invaluable guide for the implementation of human rights commitments, because it will place on record all UN recommendations in a more accessible form. It will also provide a broad overview of human rights developments, as seen by the UN's independent experts and human rights bodies. This initiative is a response to the recommendations of an international conference held last year at York University in Canada, which looked ahead to the international human rights treaty system in the next century.

In September, Canada will sponsor a conference in Montréal on human rights and the Internet. New information technologies have already demonstrated their potential for good and for bad — for publicizing human rights abuses, or for spreading hate propaganda. The conference will look at ways that we can use new technology creatively, to defend and promote human rights worldwide.

As we look ahead to the next 50 years of the UN human rights system, it is only appropriate that our young people should be involved in the celebrations. Through our program of international youth internships, Canada will place 50 young Canadians in human rights-related positions in over 20 countries around the world this year, in addition to 55 placed last year. Many of them, through placements with bodies such as the Canadian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights and the United Nations Association in Canada, will be seconded to UN and UN-related agencies, and to field operations in a variety of UN activities.

Renewing Our Vision of Human Rights

I spoke of adapting and strengthening UN institutions in an era of change; an era in which we grapple with issues ranging from labour standards to children's rights, impunity to peace-building, military expenditures to the export of small arms or landmines — complex, cross-cutting issues that have an undisputed human rights dimension. To address them effectively, I believe that we must start viewing human rights through the more comprehensive lens of human security, and, following the lead taken by the Secretary-General within the UN, integrate human rights concerns more fully into other aspects of international relations.

A human security approach calls not only for remedial action to address existing abuses, but also for preventive measures to address their root causes, including, as the High Commissioner noted, greater attention to the human right to development.

The link between human rights and human security is particularly clear in cases of conflict or the threat of conflict. Human rights abuses are often the early warning signal of emerging conflict. In countries torn by interethnic strife, ensuring respect for the human rights of every sector of the population is the key to building sustainable peace. Conversely, states that respect human rights and the rule of law are less likely to go to war with one another, unleash waves of refugees, create environmental catastrophes, engage in terrorism, or break their commercial commitments. Global stability and peace are intimately linked with