

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

## HUMAN RIGHTS

## THIRTY-SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, on December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. Besides outlining the civil and political rights which characterized traditional codes of human rights, the Universal Declaration went further by including economic, social and cultural rights. It became the initial document in what was to become the International Bill of Human Rights.

The importance of the Declaration lies in its provision of a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations and in its effectiveness as a yardstick to measure the compliance by governments with the international standards of human rights.

I think it is important to note on this anniversary that in countless disputes the United Nations has referred to the Declaration, whether in dealing with allegations of forced labour, racial discrimination, customs inconsistent with the dignity of women, or other abuses of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Today, 36 years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration, I am pleased and privileged to recognize Human Rights Day, 1984, which is so justly chosen to coincide with the birthdate of this historic document.

It was Dag Hammarskjöld who said:

Only on a scrutiny of truth, can a future of peace and justice be built.

During the past year Canada's reports to the United Nations on our implementation of civil and political rights and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination came under scrutiny by all appropriate UN bodies. Canada was commended for the thoroughness of our reporting.

In the coming year Canada will be taking yet another important step in enhancing the human rights protection of individual Canadians with the coming into force of the equality provisions of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms on April 17, 1985.

The Government of Canada is also committed to joining with other governments throughout the world in undertaking special efforts such as support to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the Second Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

I should like to highlight two of the special international events in which Canada will be an active participant in 1985. The first is the designation of 1985 as International Youth Year by the UN. This year will see a wide range of international, national and local activities being undertaken by young people in countries throughout the world focusing on the themes of participation, development and peace. These themes

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have very differing aspects in various parts of the world. One can consider, for instance, that in some countries the bridge between infancy and adult responsibilities is sudden and cruel while in developed countries the transition is more gradual.

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The second event is the World Conference on the UN Decade for Women which will be held in Nairobi next July. Canada strongly supports the attainment of full equality for women at home and abroad, their participation in the search for international peace and co-operation and their full integration in economic and social development.

We also encourage the increasing recognition for the critical role that women play in developing countries, particularly in such vital activities as the production of food. It is certainly true that women have often suffered most in times of natural disasters such as famine. Women in drought-stricken countries often give up their meagre scraps of food so that their children may live. Sometimes it is a vain sacrifice.

I think that all Canadians would like me to draw particular attention to the acute food shortage in Africa, as hunger clearly has a bearing on the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Freedom from hunger is without doubt an essential element in the realization of the dignity and worth of the individual. An ongoing program to help others to feed themselves by improving methods of production, conservation and distribution of food is a high priority in our efforts to assist developing countries; but drought and famine are natural disasters which require an immediate and more direct humanitarian response.

To this end, the Government of Canada has created the post of Canadian Emergency Co-ordinator for the African Famine and has pledged \$50 million to help alleviate this critical situation. The broad and compassionate response that countless Canadians have made to the crisis in Ethiopia is particularly laudable as it springs from individual initiatives and concern.

Human Rights Day provides an opportunity for all Canadians to reflect on the efforts we have made both at home and abroad to promote and protect human rights. I am, therefore, pleased and privileged to address the House on this day and to use this occasion to reinforce for all Canadians their Government's commitment to upholding the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are the foundations of a civilized and caring society.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to join in this activity today for the purpose of marking the thirty-sixth anniversary of the proclamation of which my hon. friend had spoken.

This Declaration of Human Rights has provided a benchmark to peoples and to countries of the world when it comes to setting standards with respect to basic human rights. It is also important that we rise in the House today to make these statements, as we are doing, because, as the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) has said, tomorrow is Human Rights