

Canada supports the renewal of the mandate of the Special Committee on the UN Charter and Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. The Committee has now reached a point from which it should be possible to make relatively quick progress to accomplish its mandate. We would expect it to be able to complete its list of proposals on peaceful settlement of disputes at its next session. We also hope the Committee will complete at its next session a comparable listing of proposals for the rationalization of procedures and for the maintenance of international peace and security. This should be facilitated by the fact that general debates have already taken place on two of these three questions and that members of the Committee have already had an opportunity to examine the proposals made on the rationalization of procedures.

2. HOSTAGE TAKING

In a statement to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly on November 16, 1978, the Canadian Representative, Mr. Philippe Kirsch, praised the Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages for its progress during the last session and commented briefly on two questions. First, he pointed out that the Canadian Delegation thought the Committee should avoid complicated formulations concerning the relationship between the proposed convention and other areas of international law, particularly the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two additional protocols adopted in 1977. Different instruments dealing with the taking of hostages should in effect be consistent with and complement each other. Second, he stressed that the Committee was not in an effective position to deal with certain problems relating to state conduct, and should concentrate on the elimination of specific individual terrorist or criminal acts. The following are some of Mr. Kirsch's comments:

At its second session, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Drafting of an International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, of which Canada is a member, has made considerable progress in the accomplishment of its mandate. One of the most difficult problems the Committee had to deal with, however, was the definition of the relationship of the proposed convention with relevant areas of international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two recently adopted additional protocols. In the view of my delegation, the Committee should avoid complicated formulations which, in that area, are more likely to become a factor of uncertainty than of clarification. Hostage-taking is a factor of uncertainty, regardless of whatever instrument one happens to be reading at the time. We should avoid setting up difficulties between different agreements but rather assume that they should be consistent with and supplementary to one another, particularly when their objectives are of a humanitarian nature. Whatever formulation is ultimately reached, however, the fact that the gap has narrowed between negotiating groups on such questions reflects the determination of the international community to ensure the successful outcome of the Committee's work.