

The first defining step is a challenge that Canada and other countries are trying to address through the promotion and pursuit of what we have come to call "good governance"...a concept that is centred on the affirmation of human rights and the effective use of scarce resources....Respect for human rights lies at the core of good governance. Unless countries meet a basic standard of respect for human rights or show a clear resolve to improve conditions and address problems, they cannot expect outside assistance or support for the course they are following. They should instead expect pressure to change. By the same token, sustained and determined efforts to strengthen observance of human rights will attract assistance and support. The reality is that sometimes we must take into account that some countries are starting from a long way back...

There is, of course, the very practical step of bringing human rights deficiencies before the UN Human Rights Commission. Canada remains committed to this process and is one of its most vigorous supporters. But this route has little practical impact. Bilateral and multilateral actions are often required. We are very sensitive to the fact that each situation is unique and that our judgments about what to do need to take into account both the unique circumstances of each of our partners and Canada's own interests and priorities in the region. Also, when possible, we will try to protect the poor, perhaps by shifting our aid from governments to non-governmental organizations.<sup>4</sup>

#### PARLIAMENTARY COMMENT

After the Prime Minister's speech at the Commonwealth conference, a lengthy debate on linking human rights and aid occurred in the House of Commons. A motion was put forward by NDP member Svend Robinson which called on the government to discontinue the free trade negotiations with US and Mexico and to review all international aid programmes to ensure they met the criteria articulated by Prime Minister Mulroney at the Commonwealth meeting.<sup>5</sup> Debate on the motion covered a wide range of issues including a discussion of countries that receive Canadian aid and have questionable human rights practices such as Burma, Kenya, Indonesia and Peru.<sup>6</sup> While most speakers applauded the government for its policy, most also called on the government to ensure that the policy is applied consistently to all aid recipients.

<sup>4</sup> Secretary of State for External Affairs. "Notes for an Address by the Honourable Barbara McDougall, Secretary of State for External Affairs to the Fourth René Cassin Lectureship in Human Rights at McGill University," *Statement*, 92/11, 19 March 1992: 6, 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Commons Debates*. 22 October 1991: 3769.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: 3769-3797, 3811-3842.