

fundamental freedoms. These have been submitted to the Secretary-General for his consideration. The Canadian Government regards the Human Rights Committee, established under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as potentially one of the most effective instruments the United Nations possesses for the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Canadian Government is of the opinion that careful consideration should be given to possible methods of increasing the ability of the United Nations system to intercede on behalf of those persons victimized through violations of human rights. My delegation regards with particular interest proposals for the creation of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who might be directed to perform a good offices function with relation to human rights violations. Another possibility would be to encourage the Secretary-General to use his good offices, either personally or through emissaries, to contact states on a confidential basis when allegations arise of gross or persistent violations of human rights. Alternatively, perhaps there might be designated an Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Under-Secretary-General to perform such emissary functions. A panel of individual experts familiar with a broad range of cultures and legal systems might be made available to advise the Secretary-General or alternate emissary on the advisability, timing, and form of such intercessions.

The Canadian Government recognizes that the promotion and protection of human rights can be most effective at the national level. It is the responsibility of national governments to promote education in human rights for all and access to appropriate human rights materials, so that citizens may better know and act upon their rights. Moreover, the Canadian Government supports efforts by the UN Office of Public Information to produce publications outlining UN instruments and activities in the field of human rights, and my delegation would encourage the widest possible dissemination of these materials. My delegation believes that respect for human rights would be enhanced by more widespread ratification of existing human rights instruments. However, all of us here are aware that acceptance of international standards in theory does not automatically ensure that they are respected in practice. The UN should encourage all states who have not done so to adhere to the optional elements of the two covenants on human rights as well as the Optional Protocol. These instruments provide a means of monitoring the extent to which states respect in practice their obligations to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. The United Nations should also encourage states to create national institutions on human rights. Particularly useful are those which are independent of governments, and which provide citizens with a means to see their grievances redressed.

It is distressing to my delegation to note that today, more than three decades after the United Nations declared the promotion of human rights as one of its primary goals, so little substantive progress has been made. Inherent in these concerns is an implicit criticism of the United Nations, and its seeming inability to come to grips with the problem of gross and persistent violations of human rights. The Government of Canada welcomes the intention of the United Nations to renew its efforts to promote human rights and to review its human rights machinery and activities. My country will continue to support efforts to identify