

## ***Preface*** ***by the Minister of Foreign Affairs***

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an occasion to commemorate and reaffirm a historic commitment undertaken by members of the international community. When, in 1948, the member states of the United Nations Assembly adopted the Declaration, they moved to enshrine once and for all the fundamental rights of the individual human being wherever she or he may live.

From that day forward, human rights were to be as central to life as food, water, air and shelter. People were no longer to be denied the right to life, liberty and security, nor to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Declaration was proclaimed as the “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.”

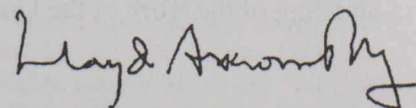
The Declaration is a milestone document for humanity. It has set the direction of all ensuing work in the area of human rights. In 1982, Canada developed its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms based on the principles of the Declaration. The Canadian Charter reflects values that are important to Canadians such as justice, fairness, tolerance and mutual respect.

But the struggle for the universal application and promotion of the principles of the Declaration is far from over. While the concept of human rights and the need for governments to respect them is now widespread, the continuing abuses of human rights in many parts of the world demonstrate that their universality is still not fully accepted. Respect for human rights must not be taken for granted. We must remain vigilant to ensure that they are universally and constantly promoted, protected and advanced — both in Canada and around the world.

This campaign is not for governments alone, but for all members of society whatever their compact, be they civil, judicial, religious or political. To this end, and as a special Canadian contribution to this commemorative anniversary of the Universal Declaration, it gives me great pleasure to join in partnership with civil society in the production of this first annual report on the work of the United Nations Human Rights system.

Based solely on UN documents, this report will provide in one place all the relevant information about the human rights situation in every country around the world as discussed and examined in the United Nations human rights fora. Its intent is to simplify, encourage and improve human rights policy-making. It will provide a concise, readily available information and reference source to researchers, academics, civil servants, diplomats, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists and others who work to promote and protect universal human rights.

Above all, I welcome this report as a further contribution by Canada and Canadians to nurture and strengthen the universal commitment undertaken by those member states 50 years ago at the United Nations. We must ensure that human rights remain an important part of our legacy to future generations, both nationally and internationally.



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Minister of Foreign Affairs