

HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada is party to 21 of the 34 treaties in the human rights field of the United Nations. Treaties include covenants, conventions and protocols. Of these, Canada is party to six of the eight major instruments. These are the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). Canada is not party to the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty or to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Consultations with the provinces and territories are underway with a view to securing their support for timely ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition to the treaties adopted by the UN, there are also a number of other human rights instrument. These include declarations, standard minimum rules, bodies of principles and so forth. For example, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has devoted a large part of its work to the human dimension, starting with the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The Copenhagen Document is the last of a series of documents devoted to compiling human rights standards. While these instruments are not legally binding, they do set a basic minimum standard which states are expected to strive to achieve.

Canadian Reports under UN Human Rights Conventions

Under a number of the UN human rights treaties, Canada is required to submit periodic reports on the measures taken to implement its obligations. Canada's second report under the ICCPR was considered by the UN Human Rights Committee in November 1990. The next report will not be due until 1994. Canada's second report under the ICESCR was submitted to the UN in July 1991 and will likely be considered by the ICESCR Committee in 1992. The ninth and tenth reports under the CERD were considered in March 1990 by the CERD Committee. The next report is due in November 1991. The third Canadian report under CEDAW was due in January 1991 and is expected to be submitted to the UN during the latter part of 1991. Consideration of the report by the CEDAW Committee is not expected until 1992, at the earliest. Canada's second report under CAT is due in 1992.

Draft Instruments