

9. that a mechanism be instituted to allow meaningful input and funding for human rights and equality-seeking groups participate in future Canadian reports to Treaty Bodies.
10. that participants explore the use of electronic means to enhance communication exchange amongst human rights and equality-seeking groups.

Working Group #2: Civil society participation in Canada in the process of reporting and monitoring the implementation of international human rights

Recommendations:

- Develop strategies to ensure greater autonomy of the domestic human rights commissions (i.e., the Québec example).
- Use international law (including customary law and treaty law) for domestic leverage.
- Challenge “dogmas”, such as the federal/provincial dichotomy and parliamentary sovereignty.
- Ensure human rights education is given paramount importance. This includes the education of parliamentarians, the judiciary, the media, the public, and NGOs themselves (i.e., “self-education”). Regarding methodology, one possibility may include holding organized meetings to educate and present positions to each party caucus.
- Use Agendas for Action, National Plans, etc. that have been developed out of UN and other conferences to offer NGOs and civil society more concrete examples of international obligations that the Canadian government has undertaken.
- Ensure Parliament plays a role in the UN reporting mechanisms, as the House is a democratic representation of the Canadian population. This would allow for greater accountability. Perhaps a system of hearings can be developed where the NGOs would present their views prior to the submission of UN reports, or the signing/ratification/implementation of treaties or conventions. The Federal Standing Committee arrangement may provide a model. These hearings may lead to hardcopy reports that could be made publicly available (i.e., the US model).
- Establish a Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Implementation of International Conventions/Treaties.
- Further explore the concept of human security to understand its role WITHIN Canada, not only in our foreign policy.
- Make information concerning human rights positions and procedures more easily accessible through the various government departments.
- Improve coherence within the domestic sphere of human rights. This includes the many government ministries (both provincial and federal) which are responsible for the same human rights issues.
- Review the mandate of the ICHRDD to study whether or not there is a need to broaden its present mission (and ensure the necessary funding to enable it to do so).
- Allocate greater funding towards accomplishing all of the above. Transparency in the method of distributing the funds is essential.
- Manage public funds through civil society organizations in order to help NGOs report on Canada more freely, and to use the Optional Protocol procedures available through international human rights conventions. The Federal Court Challenges program