

International Terrorism

At the 1972 session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General requested the inclusion on the agenda of an item entitled "Measures to prevent terrorism and other forms of violence which endanger or take innocent human lives or jeopardize fundamental freedoms." Due to the inclination of many countries to interpret incorrectly this initiative as an attempt to put the lid on national liberation movements, it was only possible to inscribe the item by specifying that it would just cover acts of "international" terrorism, and that the underlying causes of terrorism, as well as measures to prevent it, would be considered. The General Assembly eventually established a 35-member Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism which met from July 16 to August 10, 1973 in New York to prepare "recommendations for possible co-operation for the speedy elimination of the problem." Canada voted against the resolution having co-sponsored an unsuccessful competing resolution which would have requested the International Law Commission to draft, with the highest priority, a convention on measures to prevent international terrorism. In spite of dissatisfaction with the Committee's weak mandate, however, Canada agreed to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee.

In the Canadian observations submitted to the Secretary-General in the spring of 1973 and during the session of the Ad Hoc Committee, Canada took the position that although the underlying causes of terrorism should be studied, this should not delay the taking of immediate effective measures to prevent acts of international terrorism, such as the approval of a new international convention.

Given the weakness and ambiguity of its mandate, the Ad Hoc Committee ended its session without being able to reach agreement on any