



Human Rights

Participants addressing human rights discussed whether the protection of human rights in Asia-Pacific should be a goal for Canada. They also discussed what strategy would be the most effective and what would be the role for business, government and NGOs in promoting human rights. They suggested that the issue of human rights should be incorporated into all agreements, be they economic cooperation, trade- or investment-related.

Participants agreed that Canada should develop a strategy to promote human rights that is culturally sensitive and that incorporates the use of Tracks I, II and III. They suggested that while Canadian policies are well-intentioned, the strategy to implement them can be ineffective (e.g. WID). Further, they suggested that cultures are not static and that this aspect should be reflected in the strategy. They agreed that issue- or sector-specific initiatives may seem narrow, but can affect a broader range of civil society, e.g. the training of judges in Asia-Pacific which directly targets problems of corruption in the legal system while opening up avenues for reform in other sectors of society. As well, they agreed that although it is important to work in concert with like-minded countries, it would be a good idea to keep in mind that like-mindedness is more fluid and issue-specific than ever.

Policy Options

1. *Canada should direct attention at strategies, priorities and application of human rights policies, not at definition.*
2. *Canada should adopt local strategies that are issue-, sector- and country-specific.*
3. *Canada should adopt strategies that are multi-faceted targeting civil, political, economic and social spheres incorporating direct and indirect approaches (Tracks I, II, and III).*
4. *Canada should maintain and reinforce commitment to the UN system of universal human rights protection, and use the 50th anniversary of the UN human rights declaration to encourage Asia-Pacific region affirmation of these principles. Canada should continue to use other multilateral instruments of the UN and ILO to full advantage.*
5. *Canada should employ a range of options on a case-by-case basis to influence compliance with human/labour rights, including aid-, trade- and investment-related incentives and sanctions, e.g. further to positions adopted by the UN (e.g. Burma, East Timor), Canada should demonstrate an increased willingness to act.*