

human rights situations. Surely, if we are prepared to criticize regimes which violate human rights, we must also be ready to come to the assistance of governments and peoples trying to re-establish respect for human rights.

This is an area where we have to translate our principles and words into practical action. There is a role for governments in framing programs in the international field which can help advance the cause of human rights. Equally, there is a role for non-governmental organizations, particularly those with the capacity to deliver programs in other countries. There are various ways in which such an approach could be taken. We could enhance existing programs in CIDA and other government departments, such as External Affairs, Justice or Secretary of State. Or we could create new organizations with specific mandates.

At present, for instance, we are considering a completely new departure - an initiative of great significance. The Government recently appointed two eminent Canadians, Mme Giselle Côté-Harper and Dr. John Courtney, to act as special rapporteurs in advising the government on the Simard/Hockin proposal to create an Institute of Human Rights and Democratic Development. There may be several avenues open to Canada; more than one agency could be involved; and non-governmental organizations and multilateral bodies in the field of human rights could play key roles. We need your experience, insights and ideas on how to proceed. The two rapporteurs will seek that from you in the course of the next few months.

The Government is strongly committed to an extensive and open process, leading to practical initiatives in the human rights field.

The proposed institute is only one of the many fronts on which we are now taking action. Following the submission of the Simard/Hockin Report, the Department of External Affairs initiated work on a training program in international human rights, open to government officials in this department, and others involved in human rights issues. We have made very clear our interest in closer consultative arrangements with NGOs. We have proved our commitment to helping to fund the various international efforts that are going on in support of human rights, in fields ranging from torture and the rights of indigenous people, in the case of External Affairs, to the integration of women into world development, in the case of CIDA. I can also confirm that Canada will seek election to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 1988. These are areas on which I know there will be valuable discussion over the coming two days.

Once again, I welcome all participants to this meeting. Other members of the Government have been invited to spend parts of these two days with you, and my colleague and Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Roger Clinch, will host today's luncheon.

On behalf of all members of the Government, I express our thanks to each and every one of you for having accepted our invitation. I can assure you that your concerns have for us a very profound value, because respect for human rights is a basic principle for the Government of