



No. 025

January 25, 1988.

MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS OPENS NGO
CONSULTATIONS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Minister of External Relations, the Honourable Monique Landry, today opened the annual consultations between the Department of External Affairs and Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in the field of human rights. Addressing approximately forty human rights groups from all parts of Canada, she emphasized the diversity and breadth of support for human rights in Canada, and indicated that these strong domestic foundations "support and sustain an active commitment to human rights as a key element of our foreign policy".

The NGO consultations are organized annually in Ottawa by the Department of External Affairs. They traditionally take place immediately prior to the session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, where Canada currently has observer status. In attendance at this year's consultations, in addition to senior members of External Affairs and other Government Departments, was Mr. Gordon Fairweather, the head of the Canadian Delegation to the Commission.

In her opening address, Mme Landry emphasized the substantial progress made by the Government in translating commitment into tangible actions. She also mentioned recent initiatives taken by Canada in the international arena designed to strengthen human rights, prevent the erosion of the United Nations human rights program and give concrete expression to Canadian objectives. She also confirmed Canada's intention to seek election to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 1988.

.../2

Among the steps taken over the past year, Mme Landry mentioned the agreement by the Government to respond to, and provide comments on, human rights issues in the course of appearances before the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on Human Rights. She also confirmed that the Government would shortly table draft legislation creating the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, a potentially significant vehicle for programming and funding in the human rights area. With respect to the United Nations, she indicated that "the crisis is not over. Furthermore, a re-structuring exercise is now proceeding within the U.N. and this will require careful management and direction." She also expressed satisfaction that Canada has become the first country to contribute to the new United Nations Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services in the field of Human Rights, when a cheque for \$150,000 was presented to the Secretary General of the Organization.