

Statement No. 48

October 18, 1967

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS  
INTOLERANCE

Text of Statement delivered in the Third Committee  
by the Canadian representative, Mrs. Sally Merchant,  
on the draft convention on the elimination of all  
forms of religious intolerance, October 18, 1967.

The Canadian delegation welcomes this opportunity to express some general views on Item 54 of our agenda, the draft convention on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. In this first statement we will attempt to limit our comments to the way in which we believe the Committee should proceed in its work on this item. At a later stage we would of course wish to express our views on the substance of the draft convention and the question of the type and scope of the implementation articles.

At the outset I should like to express the pleasure of my delegation that this Assembly has before it for adoption, after so many years, a draft convention on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. Members of this Committee will recall that the idea of drafting such an instrument goes back to the 17th session of the General Assembly, and that the Human Rights Commission has laboured long and thoughtfully through four sessions to produce a draft declaration and convention on religious intolerance. The result is the document we see before us, a product of concerted effort, compromise and co-operation among the members of the Human Rights Commission. Our congratulations to the Human Rights Commission are, however, qualified by the disappointment we feel because pressing demands on the Commission's time prevented it from adopting a formula for implementation articles. Had the Human Rights Commission been able to do this, the work of our Committee would, we believe, have been greatly simplified. It is also somewhat disappointing that a draft declaration on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance has not been adopted. Nevertheless, we feel that a declaration as a statement of intention is of lesser significance than a convention, which is a legal instrument. Now that we have the prospect of adopting the draft convention at this session of the General Assembly, it would seem to my delegation that although it is usual practice a declaration in this case is not entirely

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necessary and that therefore we could dispense with it altogether in this case.

The work we have before us is extensive. It includes the final examination and adoption of the preamble and 12 articles of the draft convention, the consideration of an article submitted by the delegation of Jamaica, and an amendment to Article VI passed to us by the Economic and Social Council. Further, we have draft implementation articles, proposed by the sub-commission on the prevention of discrimination and protection of minorities, and some slightly different proposals for implementation submitted by the delegations of India, Nigeria, Pakistan, UAR and Upper Volta.

If the Third Committee follows its usual procedure, of holding first a general debate and then a debate on each of the articles, followed by a general debate on the types of implementation articles which should be added to the draft convention and finally engages in a debate on each phrase of each implementation article, this Committee could easily spend a month in the effort to bring this draft convention to the point of adoption. We would then have very little time left to discuss several other very important questions, such as the world social situation, the creation of a High Commissioner for Human Rights, Capital Punishment and war criminals--all items to which this Committee must also give thoughtful consideration before the end of the 22nd session of the General Assembly. We could of course postpone consideration of those items with which we were unable to deal. But, my delegation believes that the Third Committee has indulged itself in this manner at too many previous sessions of the Assembly. An attempt at self-discipline should be made. My delegation therefore warmly welcomes and supports whole-heartedly the proposal to establish a working group tabled by the distinguished delegate of New Zealand. In the view of my delegation this Committee could hold a full general debate on the draft convention, in which delegations would have ample opportunity to express their views on each of the articles of substance, discuss the type of implementation articles they would like to see, and make specific suggestions for amendments to whichever of the two sets of draft implementation articles they feel most acceptable.

At that stage--at the point at which the Committee has clearly indicated the direction a working group should take--my delegation hopes it would be possible for this Committee to appoint such a working group which would take the various amendments, sub-amendments and sub-sub-amendments in hand, and produce, insofar as is possible, a text of implementation articles for this draft convention, including in square brackets those aspects on which agreement was



impossible. In this way members of the Committee would have full opportunity for participation in the debate and in establishing terms of reference and indicating areas of emphasis and finally in representative thinking on the working group. They would enjoy full participation in producing the implementation articles. The problems which arose in the discussion of the draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women, where on at least one occasion the Committee found itself in the embarrassing position of having to undo what it had already done, might in this way be avoided, because we could hand over the detailed paper work to this drafting group which would produce a clear and unambiguous text, and submit the whole to the Third Committee for reconciliation of any remaining differences, and adoption.

In short, my delegation views the New Zealand proposal as a tool to simplify and expedite the work of this Committee. But, more important, the proposal seems to be a way of ensuring that the final document, not only reflects the wishes of the Committee, but will be a good, well-drafted document that must stand as testimony to the real concern of the Committee for the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. We feel that it is a method of producing a document that will be better ensured of universal application. It is for these reasons that my delegation warmly supports the proposal of the distinguished delegation of New Zealand and we hope that the Committee will carefully consider the merits of the proposal.

The first part of the report discusses the general situation of the country and the progress of the work. It is noted that the work has been carried out in accordance with the plan and that the results are satisfactory. The second part of the report deals with the specific work done during the period. It is noted that the work has been carried out in accordance with the plan and that the results are satisfactory.

The third part of the report deals with the financial situation of the organization. It is noted that the organization has been able to maintain its financial position and that the results are satisfactory. The fourth part of the report deals with the personnel situation of the organization. It is noted that the organization has been able to maintain its personnel position and that the results are satisfactory.