

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS: THE ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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Human rights is a comparatively new concept in international diplomacy; one which has gained considerable importance over the past decades both in bilateral and multilateral negotiations. Traditionally, issues related to human rights have been considered within the exclusive domain of States. Therefore, until very recently, any attempt to address those questions was perceived as being an infringement upon national sovereign rights. It was not too long ago, for instance, that any reference to the human rights situation in a specific country during the debates of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva--which is the main United Nations organ dealing with human rights--would be immediately called "out of order" and therefore rejected by country concerned, or that the United Nations Secretariat could not even receive letters from individuals complaining of alleged human rights violations in their own country.

This situation, however, has changed drastically in recent years. Significant and positive developments and new avenues for possible diplomatic and political action have emerged in basically all parts of the world, including those where any such action would have certainly been unsuccessful a few years back. This dramatic development is the result of many factors, not least a general improvement in the international climate, particularly in the relations between the United States and the Former Soviet Union. Indeed, today, the same Commission on Human Rights can and does appoint special rapporteurs to report on the human rights situations in specific countries (presently Afghanistan, Burundi, Iran, the Former Yugoslavia, Palestine, Rwanda), and in 1989 the Secretariat received and processed some 300,000 complaints of human rights violations throughout the world. Yet changes of this magnitude could not have been achieved without the patient and often little known efforts of members of the international community within the framework of the United Nations--efforts that have been undertaken throughout the past 50 years.

When the Charter of the United Nations was signed in June 1945, it contained numerous references to human rights. While preliminary consultations in 1944 (August-October) between China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (the so-called Dumbarton Oaks conference) had already laid the ground for key human rights endeavors by the future United Nations Organization, it was only in San Francisco the following May that a proposal was made to include in the United Nations Charter a "Declaration on the Essential Rights of Man." Because of time constraints, that proposal could not be implemented, but it led to a strengthening of the human rights components in the Charter: in the Preamble; with respect to the purposes of the Organization (art. 1); in the part dealing with international economic and social co-operation (arts. 55, 56) as well as in the Chapter on the function of specific bodies (arts. 62, 68), or that on trust territories (arts. 73, 76). In the mind of the authors of the Charter, no

longer was the fate of human beings simply a matter for the free determination of States. Humanity, as a whole, in the newly created United Nations, would speak and act not only to promote peace but to preserve, protect and defend the dignity of the human person.

It took another three years for the international community to agree on a truly revolutionary document in the field of human rights: the Universal Declaration of Human rights. The Declaration, which came into being on 10 December 1948, was the result of strenuous diplomatic and negotiating efforts carried out in Paris, where the General Assembly then met, by people like Rene Cassin (France), John Peters Humphrey (Canada), the first Director of the United Nations Human Rights Division, Charles Malik (Lebanon) and Eleanor Roosevelt (USA). The Universal Declaration did not represent a minimum common denominator of respect for human rights; on the contrary, it presented desirable standards in the attainment of human rights which were very high, almost utopian for that time, and which remain, even now, in many respects, the objectives to be attained by the nations of today. From the legal point of view, it was not a binding document but a "mere" resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Declaration, however, was to change forever governments' approaches to human rights.

Very briefly, article 1 reads: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The article thus defines the basic assumption of the Declaration: 1) that the right to liberty and equality is man's birthright and cannot be alienated, and 2) that because man is a rational and moral being, he is therefore entitled to certain inherent rights and freedoms.

Article 2 sets out the basic principle of equality and non-discrimination as regards the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. And article 3 proclaims three fundamental and interrelated rights: the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to security of person. These rights are essential to enjoyment of all the other rights set forth in the Declaration. Article 3 thus serves as a cornerstone, introducing the series of articles (arts. 4-21) in which the rights of every person as an individual are elaborated further. Among them are the freedom from slavery and servitude; freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law; the right to an effective judicial remedy; freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; the right to a fair trial and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty, freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence; freedom of movement, the right of asylum, the right to a nationality, the right to marry and to found a family, the right to own property, freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; the right of association and of assembly, the right to take part in government; and the right of equal access to public service.

Article 22, the second cornerstone of the Declaration, introduces articles 23 to 27 in which economic, social and cultural rights--the rights to which everyone is entitled "as a member of society"--are set out. The article characterizes these rights as indispensable for human dignity and the free development of personality, and indicates that they are to be realized "through national efforts and international co-operation." At the same time it points out the limitations of that realization, the extent of which depends upon the resources of each State and of the

international community.

The economic, social and cultural rights recognized in articles 22 to 27 include the right to social security, the right to work, the right to rest and leisure, the right to a standard of living adequate to health and well-being, the right to education, and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community.

The concluding articles--articles 28 to 30--recognize that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized, and stress the duties and responsibilities which each individual owes to his community. As an *obiter dictum*, the articles of the Universal Declaration have been recently the subject of a special stamp issue of the United Nations Postal Administration.

The Declaration is, therefore, a Magna Carta of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to which everyone is equally entitled. Although we are far from the universal enjoyment of its rights and freedoms, the Universal Declaration remains the beacon that lights our path in the pursuit of human rights everywhere. Indeed, at the national level, the Universal Declaration has provided the guiding principle for the human rights provisions of the Constitutions of newly independent States, and has influenced both national legislation and judicial decisions. Regionally, it has inspired the African, American and European human rights treaties, as well as numerous other instruments designed to further human rights. Thus, one of the most extraordinary aspects of the Declaration is that it has, in fact, shown itself to be of universal relevance for all mankind. As the original 51 members of the United Nations expanded to 185, the peoples of the emerging nations found themselves and their aspirations reflected in the words of the Universal Declaration, which has become the standard of achievement for all members of the human family. Since that time, great progress has been made and the declaration itself later branched out into the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocols; the Convention against Racial Discrimination and 60 other instruments, protecting basically all aspects of human endeavor.

The General Assembly, for example, endorsed, in December 1990, the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers adopted at the eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. The General Assembly adopted, in December 1992, the Declaration on the Rights of the Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The General Assembly, at the same time, adopted the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. With respect to the process of standard-setting, it should be noted that a draft declaration concerning indigenous rights is still under discussion. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989, and two Optional Protocols are currently under discussion. The Assembly also adopted, on 15 December 1989, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights concerning the death penalty, which entered into force in July 1991.

It is clear that with the coming into force in 1976 of the International Covenants a new era in the history of human rights began. For the first time, States were bound before the international community to promote their individual citizens' rights. For the first time, they granted an international body authority to study their fidelity to promise to observe those rights.

For the first time, victims of human rights violations had a means of recourse outside the jurisdiction of the authorities who were guilty of such violations.

The United Nations today looks forward to the time of universal adherence to the various human rights instruments, when all States will be subject to a comprehensive system of review of human rights observance. At the same time, it is seeking to encourage improvements in national legislation and in administrative and judicial practices related to human rights, and to convince governments to both stop violations and remedy controversial individual human rights cases.

Implementation

While the legislative infrastructure at the disposal of the international community for the promotion and protection of human rights is most comprehensive, it cannot, in itself, guarantee the universal enjoyment of those rights. Indeed, the United Nations does not have the power to enforce even the most basic principles of human rights. Therefore, the effective implementation of human rights instruments, which is now at the heart of the United Nations efforts in the field of human rights, requires a strong commitment by all concerned, primarily by the governments themselves. Over the past years, the United Nations has set up a complex but effective system whose aim is the universal implementation of internationally accepted human rights standards. This task is carried out by the Commission on Human Rights and the human rights bodies set up under the Covenants and other international conventions, notably the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Committee against Torture; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

These monitoring bodies meet regularly to examine States' reports in which governments explain what legislative, administrative or judicial measures they have adopted to comply with the obligations undertaken pursuant to the relevant Conventions. These reports are carefully scrutinized by independent and outstanding experts and are more and more given publicity by an attentive media. They go through the General Assembly and determine the adoption of resolutions requesting urgent action by Member States. The end result of this process is often the corresponding modifications of national legislations and practices.

Another, perhaps more immediate, monitoring system consists in examining individual communications, that is, complaints. Every year countless individual complaints are received and processed by the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva. In 1994, some 100,000 communications were received. Whereas the bulk of communications are examined under the so-called "1503 Procedure," (named after the ECOSOC resolution of 1970 so numbered) which is intended to identify gross and systematic violations of human rights, other communications can be dealt with under the more rigorous procedures available under the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

Discrimination. While the examination of such individual complaints takes place in closed meetings of the relevant bodies, final decisions are made public.

Since 1976, for instance, the United Nations Human Rights Committee, established pursuant to article 28 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has developed an effective machinery for dealing with violations of civil and political rights. The Committee performs the important function of vindicating the rights of individuals vis-a-vis States, thereby giving reality to the notion that individuals themselves, not only States, have rights in international law. To date 130 States have ratified or acceded to the Covenant. Under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant, individuals who claim that any of the rights enumerated in the Covenant have been violated and who have exhausted all available domestic remedies may submit written communications to the Committee for consideration. Eighty-Four States have accepted the competence of the Committee to deal with individual complaints under the First Optional Protocol - last among them: Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Kyrgistan, Latvia, Ukraine, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Other countries, such as the Russian Federation and Poland, have indicated their willingness to adhere to it and did it.

Since the Committee started its work under the First Optional Protocol procedure in 1977 and up to mid 1995, 645 communications concerning 48 States parties have been placed before the Committee for examination. Final decisions on the merits have been adopted in 208 cases and violations of various provisions of the Covenant found in most of them. These decisions are published in the Annual Reports of the Committee and in compendia of the Committee's jurisprudence of "Selected Decisions."

The Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, which aims at the abolition of the death penalty, was adopted by the General Assembly on 15 December 1989 and entered into force on 11 July 1991. It has been ratified or acceded to by 28 States.

The Human Rights Committee has already created a number of precedents regarding the interpretation and application of the Covenant. Although the "views" adopted are not binding as such, they have led to the amendment or enactment of new legislation by States parties. In addition, the Committee's "general comments have, over a period of 18 years, given a thorough interpretation of various articles. In particular, its two general comments on Article 6, the right to life, definitely contributed to the adoption of the Second Optional Protocol on Abolition of the Death Penalty by the General Assembly in 1989.

Landmark decisions which have considerably enhanced the jurisprudence of the Committee are the decisions in *Pratt and Morgan v. Jamaica* adopted in April 1989, and *Toonen v. Australia* and *Kivenmaa v. Finland* both adopted in March 1994.

Earl Pratt and Ivan Morgan were inmates on death roll in Jamaica. They were kept under inhuman conditions at the prison and even after a stay of execution had been granted, they were not removed from the death roll until 45 minutes before the scheduled execution. The Committee held that Jamaica had violated Article 7 of the Covenant; because of the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and also article 14 because the authors were not tried without undue delay.

In the case *Toonen v. Australia*, the Committee pronounced itself on sexual orientation. The author, a homosexual alleged that certain sections of the Tasmanian Criminal Code which criminalized various forms of sexual contacts between men, violated the right to privacy (Art.

17 of the Covenant).

In addition, the Committee interpreted Article 26 as to whether sexual orientation may be subsumed under the term . . . "or other status." The Committee held for various reasons that the sections of the Tasmanian Code did not meet the test of "reasonableness" under the circumstances of the case and therefore that they interfered arbitrarily with the author's rights under Article 17. The Committee also held that the term "sex" in Article 2 and 26 of the Covenant should include sexual orientation.

In the case *Kivenmaa v. Finland*, the author had protested, by distributing leaflets and raising a banner, against the human rights record of a visiting head of state. The author alleged that the authorities had violated Articles 15, 19 and 21 of the Covenant relating *inter alia* to the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 by confiscating the banner and charging her with violation of the Finnish Act on Public Meetings. The Committee found a violation of Article 19 and urged the State party to provide the victim, pursuant to article 2, with an appropriate remedy and to adopt measures to prevent recurrence in the future.

Although the Committee's decisions are, unlike the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, not legally binding on States parties to the Covenant, the Committee's recommendations have been largely observed by States parties. This is particularly true of States that have implemented their decision by changing their legislation, releasing prisoners and paying compensation or providing other appropriate remedies to victims of human rights violations. Clearly the Committee's final decisions have an important effect, by inducing States parties to conform their human rights practice to international standards.

These are very significant successes, and we are optimistic that this cooperation with States parties to the Covenant will increase in the coming years. Thus, human rights are no longer viewed as falling exclusively in the domain of domestic jurisdiction; the concept of State sovereignty no longer precludes international scrutiny of alleged violations of human rights. Indeed, much has been achieved since the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights some forty years ago.

Not all situations are dealt with by bodies such as the Committee. Many serious violations of human rights are considered by the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary organs, such as the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities or working groups. Indeed, no part of the world is immune from United Nations scrutiny when it comes to human rights issues. With growing frequency, the States concerned accept the legitimacy of United Nations investigations by special rapporteurs, invite them for on-site investigations and reply in detail to often very critical reports. Reviews of the human rights situation in specific countries are not the only way the United Nations can focus attention on violations of human rights and seek to bring about changes. Serious phenomena, such as disappearances, torture and summary or arbitrary executions or the issue of religious intolerance, are also dealt with by special rapporteurs, i.e., special investigators, on a worldwide basis and with the constant input of non-governmental organizations, such as Amnesty International. On the basis of reliable information, urgent appeals are conveyed to governments. The yearly reports of the special rapporteurs are also the object of thorough scrutiny by the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and, of course, the media. To mention

one example, the Working Group on Disappearances has already dealt with over 42,800 individual cases in more than 62 countries.

Finally, mention should be made of the exercise by the Secretary-General himself of his good offices, *inter alia*, for example, to prevent executions where minimum standards for the conduct of a fair trial have been disregarded, or to reunite families, or to intercede on behalf of political dissidents.

While the mechanisms briefly referred to are essential for the implementation and monitoring of compliance with international human rights standards, national human rights infrastructures are the key to prevent or redress violations. That is why more of our action is now geared toward building up or strengthening those national institutions where they are most needed, and providing assistance and training to those who administer justice and enforce the law within individual countries.

Our approach in these endeavors is action-oriented, concrete and pragmatic. It is based on the philosophy that "charity begins at home" and that a crucial bastion against the occurrence of human rights violations is the presence of strong national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Activities under this revitalized programme, referred to as the United Nations Advisory Services and Technical Assistance Programme in the Field of Human Rights, range from assistance in setting up human rights centers or offices to the provision of expert advice in formulating legislation that meets international human rights standards; from training administrators of justice to providing other expert assistance on specific human rights questions; from creating human rights fellowships and internships to establishing law libraries and law faculties; from the translation into local languages of basic human rights instruments to other *ad hoc* forms of technical support. The assistance, therefore, is tailor-made to meet the specific requirements of the country concerned. Important meetings to review topical human rights issues with those directly responsible, nationally or regionally, are being organized in all parts of the world.

Experience confirms that arrangements for the training of national administrators of justice, of leading officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice, and of law enforcement officials, particularly police officers and prison administrators, as well as military personnel, can play an invaluable and catalytic role in fostering a national consensus on human rights matters and in strengthening national human rights infrastructures. Indeed, our goal is the widest possible implementation of human rights standards and procedures.

On the basis of experience thus far, such activities have in some cases directly contributed to the formation and/or strengthening of national human rights commissions or offices. In others, they have facilitated the access to international human rights treaties--most notably the two Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. In still other cases, they have sped up the process of bringing national legislation into line with international instruments and have improved the reporting of States parties to the various treaty-bodies.

In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of these activities, resources from the United Nations system as a whole are being tapped. Thus, a number of specific projects are

carried out in co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Labor Office, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Most of these organizations have field offices, thus enhancing our ability to reach out to people and nations in need.

Of course, these activities are an adjunct, albeit an extremely useful and constructive one, to the existing investigation and monitoring procedures. They can never provide an alibi for exemption from investigation and examination of possible human rights abuses by any State. Assistance by the United Nations is thus not a "free ticket" from scrutiny.

It should be emphasized that respect for human rights is not only the foundation of peace, freedom and justice, as the preamble of the Universal Declaration states, it is also an essential condition for sustainable economic development. Indeed, human rights and development are clearly interdependent as the denial and violation of the human rights of individuals inevitably undermine the development process. The organs of the United Nations are increasingly looking into the human rights aspects of economic and social progress and have begun to analyse more thoroughly the human rights aspects of issues such as Third World debt, requirements of financial, banking and assistance institutions, and the phenomenon of extreme poverty. Indeed, a good case can be made for emphasizing the undeniable link between development and the attainment of human rights.

In connection with our efforts in this area, we have brought together high level representatives from the development, financial and human rights sectors at an international consultation which was held in January 1990. The consultation dealt with some of the most crucial questions posed by development and human rights in the developing and underdeveloped world and laid the ground for our action in this domain over the next few years. It also provided a substantive input into the development strategy of the United Nations for the rest of this century addressed at the special session of the General Assembly in May 1990.

In this connection, mention should also be made of the seminar on Social Indicators to measure implementation of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights held in 1993 and the appointment of a special rapporteur on Income Distribution.

In view of the democratization process in South Africa, most United Nations activities related to *apartheid* have been abolished. Within the framework of the 3rd Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, phenomena related to contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance have, however, surged as a new threat to human dignity.

Information/Education

Laws and mechanisms of implementation are not sufficient in themselves. People everywhere must first be aware of their rights before they can hope to have those rights respected and protected. Information and education are thus indispensable tools in the achievement of our

objectives.

The General Assembly and the other legislative bodies have repeatedly emphasized the importance of information and education on human rights at all levels of society. During the preparations for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, several activities focused on updating and innovation of human rights publications within the ambit of the World Campaign for Human Rights. The adoption by the General Assembly in December 1994 of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education may stimulate further, once the programme of activities is adopted, activities at the primary and secondary school levels.

The message emanating from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is fundamental. Our task today is to help translate those remarkable principles and standards into everybody's reality. The World Campaign of Information is an essential tool to achieve that end. Indeed, the Campaign will engage the complementary activities of the United Nations system, member States, and that wider human rights community made up of academic and research communities, national and regional human rights institutions, NGOs and the mass media. Its goal is to reach the public in every country in the world; to raise consciousness of human rights in each of those countries.

The success of the World Campaign will, for a great deal, depend on the active and material support of Member States. In this connection, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights have requested to provide all facilities and assistance necessary for the active promotion of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families adopted by the General Assembly in December 1990 through the World Campaign for Human Rights. The assistance of Member States will be needed particularly in disseminating United Nations information and reference material, in co-operating with the United Nations in organizing regional workshops, training courses and meetings of experts and in producing information and reference material in languages other than the six official languages of the United Nations.

In this connection, special attention is given to our collaboration with regional bodies, such as the Council of Europe and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the newly created African Commission on Human and People's Rights, which perform vital regional tasks in this field. We have also assisted in the establishment of an African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies in Banjul (The Gambia). Following one of our meetings in Tunisia in 1988, an Arab Institute of Human Rights was set up in Tunis in 1989, with which the Centre is endeavoring to establish a comprehensive programme of co-operation for the Arab region. A broader range of activities includes contacts and co-operation with such well-known institutions as the Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg (France), the one in San Jose (Costa Rica) and in San Remo (Italy).

Recently, the Centre for Human Rights has established a human rights presence in various parts of the world which hopes to enhance the human rights situation at the local level. Thus far the Centre has established human rights presence in Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala, and Rwanda.

Thus, the Human Rights Programme seeks to build up a universal culture of human rights, one that clearly recognizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms are inherent in the

human person as such, without any distinction. The voice of human rights is bound to be a source of hope for the oppressed, for silence is all too often the unwilling accomplice of tyranny.

Since its inception, the campaign has reached all regions of the world in a balanced, factual and objective manner, through the ever-growing co-operation and participation of the wider human rights community and, above all, of nongovernmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in our efforts for the protection of human rights. Their engagement in this field constitutes a major aspect of international diplomacy. We truly welcome a growing partnership with the NGO community, not least within the framework of the World Campaign.

Second World Conference on Human Rights

The General Assembly, in 1990, decided to organize a Second World Conference on Human Rights. The conference convened in 1993 in Vienna with the following objectives:

- a) to review and assess the progress that has been made in the field of human rights since the adoption to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and also to identify obstacles that hinder progress in the area of human rights;
- b) to examine the relationship between the development and the enjoyment of everyone of economic, social, and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights;
- c) to examine ways and means to improve the implementation of existing human rights standards and instruments;
- d) to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods and mechanisms used by the United Nations in the field of human rights;
- e) to formulate concrete recommendations for improving the effectiveness of United Nations activities and mechanisms in the field of human rights;
- f) to make recommendations for ensuring the necessary financial and other resources for United Nations activities in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

During this Conference, amongst others things, it was recommended that additional approaches to strengthen the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights be examined; for example, a system of indicators to measure progress in the realization of the rights set forth in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Vienna Conference, in addition, recommended the creation of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In accordance with a 1993 resolution 48/141, of 20th December, the General Assembly welcomed the appointment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. His function, *inter alia*, will be to co-ordinate relevant United Nations education and public information programmes in the field of human rights.

Human rights, therefore, remain the central pillar of the work of the United Nations

Organizations for the next century. Indeed, they lie right at the heart of our multilateral endeavors. Without respect for the dignity and worth of all members of the human family, our efforts--whether in the field of international peace and security or in that of economic, social and cultural development--cannot possibly succeed, for without respect for human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all--women, men, children, minorities--they would have no solid foundations.

A larger engagement by the United Nations and Member States in human rights may promise greater results than heretofore expected and be part of a preventive strategy which could --if implemented with circumspection--greatly facilitate our task in other areas.

In this connection, tribute should be paid to non-governmental organizations active in the field of human rights for the important role played in basically all aspects of our activities. Their attachment to and input in the human rights programme of the United Nations is an example of the growing international participation in human rights issues.

There exists a triangular relationship between the requirements of legislation, implementation and information/education which form the basis of the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights. They will be pursued more effectively in the years ahead in an increasingly close co-operation with the wider human rights community referred to before. For while the legislative process is today basically behind us, the priority now is clearly the universal implementation of international human rights norms and standards through more effective cooperation with national and international institutions and organizations. To that end, the role of a well-informed and constructive public opinion is essential in ensuring people's awareness of human rights and fundamental freedoms and governments' participation and support in this global enterprise.

At the United Nations we fully intend to live up to this challenge, in clear partnership with governments, national and regional institutions, academic and research communities, the media and non-governmental organizations. Indeed the success of human rights, and, more in general, of the ideal of freedom, justice and peace in the world can only be accomplished through the joint endeavors of all concerned.