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**EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**WORK OF THE 48TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (1993)**  
**IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS' FIELD**

Secretariat memorandum  
prepared by the Directorate of Human Rights

## **I. GENERAL ATMOSPHERE AND MAIN RESULTS OF THE 48th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS' FIELD**

### **A. General atmosphere**

The 48th session of the General Assembly, which began on 21 September 1993, was held after the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 14-25 June 1993). However, the significance of this sequence of events is not merely chronological. Clearly, with regard to human rights, the proceedings of the General Assembly, particularly those of its Third Committee (the social, humanitarian and cultural committee) were greatly influenced - indeed, more than was anticipated or even hoped - by the proceedings and results of the World Conference. Moreover, as the Swiss representative pointed out, the Third Committee was the first UN body asked to study ways of ensuring that the recommendations in the Vienna final document (Declaration and Programme of Action) were implemented.

The Conference's influence could be sensed in the very atmosphere of the proceedings. Apart from the tensions and "mini-crises", there was a feeling that every effort should be made to avoid jeopardising what had been achieved in Vienna. In more concrete terms, the "spirit of Vienna" may be seen in the results obtained regarding the rights of women and human rights education (see B below), the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights (see III below), the number of resolutions relating to individual countries (see IV below) and even the question of resources (see V below).

This positive appraisal - widely shared, it would appear - should not, however, obviate the need for a detailed analysis of the Conference and of follow-up thereto (see II below).

Such an approach is all the more necessary as the political and ideological tendencies and tensions already described in previous reports (CM (90) 228, CM (92) 7, CM (93) 11) are persisting. They may now be less strong but, in our view, it is too early to infer from this that they are disappearing. Despite certain optimistic forecasts, recent experience shows that we are unfortunately not yet at the beginning of "the end of History" or of a "new world order".

The phenomenon which should be uppermost in our minds is without doubt the North-South divide. Of course, the "South" is far from being a monolithic bloc. It is made up of several groups (African, Asian, Latin-American and Islamic countries) which are not all particularly a cohesive. In the main, these countries belong to the Non-Aligned Movement, but those who speak on their behalf are not always representative. The most active ones - those who created the most difficulties during the preparation and holding of the World Conference - may sometimes give the impression of forming a nucleus of somewhat forlorn dissenters (some Western diplomats call them "orphans of communism").

Nevertheless, this small group of countries represents a force that still carries some weight in negotiations. As a result, it is possible to reach a consensus on important issues, but often because - by dint of compromises - the level of demands has been considerably lowered; or else the texts are so general, if not actually ambiguous, that their implementation will call for the utmost vigilance.

Apart from these factors, which may appear transitory, we consider it important to bear in mind that international economic trends can easily lead to a strengthening or even hardening of the great majority of southern countries, far exceeding the hard core of "dissenters". Signs of this are already visible in the increasing importance of the debate on the economic system and the right to development or, in a different context, on the fight against racism. Similarly, the adoption at the last session of the Commission on Human Rights of the Cuban draft on the various mechanisms and procedural rules concerning communications (Resolution 1993/58) is a signal which should not be under-estimated.

Also in connection with the subject of the political tendencies that marked the 48th session of the General Assembly, it would worth looking at the consequences of the considerable weight of the USA and, conversely (but for how long?), the somewhat subdued attitude of Russia. But, of course, the main emphasis should be on the place and role of the Western group.

At the risk of appearing provocative, one might wonder whether this group chiefly exists in mere contradistinction from the "others". Of course, there is the nucleus of the Twelve. But its unity is often relative, and its effectiveness weakened by the need for numerous, sometimes laborious internal negotiations. The Central and East European countries, which form a group apart, should be more closely involved in the deliberations of the Western group, whereas they are isolated, which cannot fail to exacerbate the tensions still existing between some of them.

These reflections are not purely personal ones, but result from conversations with the delegates of several Council of Europe member States, who consider that the Council should play a more active role in the work of the United Nations, particularly within the Third Committee. Pointing out that the Council of Europe comprises countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as members of the Non-Aligned Movement or the Islamic Conference, some feel that fuller advantage should be taken of this structure and, for example, meetings of all Council of Europe member States scheduled during UN sessions.

## **B. Main results**

The salient results of the session are covered elsewhere in this memorandum. Suffice it to refer here to the texts adopted on other subjects and to mention certain particular questions.

### **1. TEXTS ADOPTED**

Apart from item 114 of the agenda ("Human Rights questions"), the General Assembly adopted, in particular, some resolutions on the following subjects (unless otherwise indicated, the resolutions were adopted by consensus):

#### **i. Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (item 107)**

Resolutions 48/89 to 91

with, in particular, the proclamation of a 3rd Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003), accompanied by a programme of action.

#### **ii. Advancement of women (item 111)**

Resolutions 48/104 to 111

The number and significance of these texts are indicative of the change in attitudes towards these problems, which was already visible at the World Conference (para 18 of the Declaration and paras 36-44 of the Programme of Action).

Particularly noteworthy are the resolutions on a subject that is also of great concern to the Council of Europe: violence against women. The Assembly adopted a Declaration on the elimination of violence against women<sup>1</sup> and a Resolution on "violence against women migrant workers". Mention could also be made of Resolution 48/143 ("Rape and abuse of women in the areas of armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia").

The experts will recall that, at its previous session, the Commission on Human Rights decided to consider appointing, in 1994 a special rapporteur on violence against women (Resolution 1993/46) and that the Sub-Commission appointed a special rapporteur on sexual slavery in times of war.

The resolutions adopted on agenda item 114 are as follows:

a) International Covenants on Human Rights

Resolution 48/119

Paras 6, 8 and 9, relating to derogations and reservations, should be noted.

b) Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Resolution 48/120

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<sup>1</sup> Note should be taken of Article 4, which stipulates that "States should condemn violence against women and should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination".

- c) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

Resolution 48/148

The need for governments to consider ratifying or acceding to this convention cannot be over-emphasised.

- d) World Conference on Human Rights

Resolution 48/121

- e) Human Rights and Terrorism

Resolution 48/122

- f) Alternative approaches and ways and means within the United Nations system for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Resolution 48/123

Votes in favour	:	115	(including Cyprus)
Votes against	:	34	(including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom)
Abstentions	:	21	(including Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey)

- g) Respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States in their electoral processes

Resolution 48/124

Votes in favour	:	101	(including Cyprus)
Votes against	:	51	(including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom)
Abstentions	:	17	

- h) Enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections

Resolution 48/131

Votes in favour	:	153	(including the member States of the Council of Europe)
Votes against	:	0	
Abstentions	:	13	

As in previous years, it is not always obvious how these two texts (the first submitted by Cuba, the second by the United States) can be reconciled.

- i) Strengthening of United Nations action in the human rights field through the promotion of international co-operation and the importance of non-selectivity, impartiality and objectivity

Resolution 48/125

At its next session, the Commission on Human Rights will look at a report by the Secretary General on this subject (Doc. E/CN.4/1994/41).

j) United Nations Year for Tolerance (1995)

Resolution 48/126

k) Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance

Resolution 48/128

With regard to these two resolutions, it should be recalled that the Council of Europe's Summit Meeting (Vienna 8/9 October 1993) adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. A seminar on intolerance will be held in Strasbourg on 3 and 4 March 1994.

l) Human rights education decade

Resolution 48/127

This is another subject directly in line with the Council of Europe's own concerns. In the Third Committee, many speeches were made on the question of education, emphasising the need to create a genuine "human rights culture".

m) Strengthening of the Centre for Human Rights of the Secretariat

Resolution 48/129

n) Right to development

Resolution 48/130

o) Strengthening of the rule of law

Resolution 48/132



- p) International Year (1993) and International Decade of the World's Indigenous People

Resolutions 48/133 and

- q) National institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights

Resolution 48/134 (with, in an annex, a set of principles concerning the status of these institutions)

- r) Internally displaced persons

Resolution 48/135

- s) Plight of street children

Resolution 48/136

In general, the question of children's rights is an important item on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights (item 22)

The General Assembly also adopted two resolutions (48/156 and 157) on the protection of children in especially difficult situations, particularly in cases of armed conflict.

- t) Human rights in the administration of justice

Resolution 48/137

- u) Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Resolution 48/138

The experts will recall that the significant question still outstanding, is that of establishing a system to supervise respect for the rights proclaimed in the Declaration.

- v) Human rights and mass exoduses

Resolution 48/139

- w) Human rights and scientific and technological progress

Resolution 48/140

2. PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

Among the many questions brought up in the Third Committee, three, in our opinion, are worthy of particular attention.

- a) Monitoring mechanisms

Observations and suggestions were made by several delegates of Council of Europe member States concerning the current situation regarding the various mechanisms set up, whether under conventions or otherwise, for the purpose of supervising, investigating and monitoring. For example, the Czech delegate mentioned the shortcomings of most of these mechanisms as well as the urgent need to reinforce them. On behalf of the Twelve, the Belgian delegate highlighted many areas where improvements are called for. The Austrian delegate emphasised the inadequacy of follow-up by States to the recommendations made by these mechanisms (the representatives of the international human rights treaty bodies, who attended the World Conference, laid great stress on this point; see Doc. A/CONF. 157/TBB/4, paras 11 and 12); and the Slovenian delegation submitted a document containing a series of "measures prior to the creation of a post of High Commissioner for Human

Rights" (Doc. A/C.3/48/8). Some delegates reiterated proposals put forward at the World Conference: creation of an international Court of Human Rights (Italy); creation, within the General Assembly, of a new Committee for human rights and humanitarian affairs (Poland).

It will be recalled that the question of monitoring mechanisms was a prominent theme at the World Conference, where it was the subject of a number of detailed studies: Strasbourg Interregional Meeting, 28-30 January 1993 (theme 1-B); N. Rodley (Doc A/CONF. 157/PC/60/Add. 6); Amnesty International (Doc A/CONF. 157/PC/62/Add. 1); Ph. Alston (Doc A/CONF. 157/PC/62/Add. 11/Rev. 1); I. Boerefijn and K. Davidse, "The World Conference on Human Rights and Supervision of Implementation of Human Rights", *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 1993/4 pp. 457-468; E. Tistounet, "Amélioration des procédures conventionnelles des Nations Unies en matière de droits de l'homme" (Improving UN treaty procedures with regard to human rights), *Revue universelle des droits de l'homme*, 1993, pp 145-155.

More concretely (and more disturbingly), this question gave rise to heated discussions in the Commission on Human Rights (aforementioned resolution 1993/58) and in the Sub-Commission (decision 1993/104 on procedure 1503) and will be on the agenda for the next session of the Commission on Human Rights (items 11(a) and 12 (b)).

In this context, reference should be made to the recommendation by the representatives of the universal and regional human rights treaty bodies, that meetings such as the one held on the occasion of the World Conference should be arranged periodically (Doc A/CONF. 157/TBB/4, p. 6 para 6).

b) An integrated approach to human rights

The World Conference placed considerable emphasis on the need for increasingly close links between human rights and peace, security, democracy, development, etc (see theme 2 of the Strasbourg Interregional Meeting). Trends regarding peace-keeping operations are particularly significant from this point of view. Generally speaking, human rights are no longer viewed as a separate sector, but as a fundamental dimension of various fields with which human rights were previously deemed unconnected.

Several delegates in the Third Committee stressed the importance of this development and the need to take it into account. The following statement by the Finnish delegate was one of the most clear-cut in the matter :

"Security is not just a military concept. It is to a large extent dependent on economic and social activities. Human security is not just about weapons - it is all about human dignity. Prevention in its deepest sense means attacking the root causes of conflict, including shortcomings in the respect for human rights. Since many conflicts have complex roots, preventive diplomacy, including early warning and fact finding mechanisms, should target economic and social conditions and trends as well as political indicators.

Human rights, along with humanitarian assistance and election monitoring, have become an integral part in maintaining peace and security. Today, peace-keeping operations are often aimed at assisting in reconstructing entire states and societies. Recognizing the basic reason in forming societies being to improve the conditions of humanity and setting human beings at the centre of our collective concerns is, we believe, the core in serving that very humanity.

On a global scale, political and security questions, human rights, humanitarian affairs, social and economic development and democracy are inextricably linked. In approaching all these elements. A comprehensive, coordinated and sufficiently flexible approach has to be found. That approach would eventually require a joint strategy for human rights, development, democracy and security."

In this context, mention may also be made to the close link which should be established between human rights and international humanitarian law. As the Swiss delegate stated, "this would enable the gap to be filled between these two branches of international law in the "grey areas" situations where serious human rights abuses very often occur. In such cases, all the States concerned should apply minimum standards in accordance with international instruments of human rights and humanitarian law."

This integrated approach to human rights is without doubt a step forward. However, the approach should be kept within certain limits if we wish to avoid human rights, which would be reduced to a mere "dimension", from being watered down within a variety of issues to the detriment of their specific nature and inherent requirements.

c) Preventive diplomacy

As illustrated by the above-quoted statement of the Finnish delegate, there is a link between the question just mentioned and preventive diplomacy. The latter deserves special mention, however, because of the great interest it arouses (see the statements by the Belgian and Austrian delegates in the report prepared for the 1992 exchange of views, CM (92)7, pp 4-6, as well as the Strasbourg Interregional Meeting, theme 1-C). It is interesting to note in this connection that treaty committees (racial discrimination and rights of the child) adopted some prevention and urgent intervention procedures.

## II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

As stated at the beginning, the Vienna Conference undoubtedly influenced the proceedings of the Third Committee. However, a more detailed analysis should be made of the extent and significance of this influence. For example, other events such as the positive developments in the Middle East, South Africa and Cambodia also had a definite influence. Similarly, the increasing involvement of the Security Council in human rights matters is inevitably having repercussions within the General Assembly. To be precise, it should be acknowledged that the Vienna results were not a permanent and indisputable gain for all states. Some attempted to halt the momentum initiated at the World Conference and even to backtrack. This is, moreover, the context in which the debate on the High Commissioner for Human Rights is taking place. Many consider the creation of such an office could provide a safeguard against certain negative tendencies.

Of course, the analysis should focus mainly on the practical follow-up to be given to the Vienna Declaration and particularly the Programme of Action. The Plan Activities drawn up by the Secretariat of the Centre for Human Rights could serve as a useful framework. It should also be recalled in this connection that the terms of reference of the working group set up by the Third Committee involved considering not only "the question of the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights" but also "other aspects of the implementation of the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as set out in paragraphs 17 and 18 of the Declaration".

As part of the follow-up to Vienna, attention should be given to the role and place of NGOs, a problem relevant to certain thinking carried out within the Council of Europe.

The Vienna Declaration "recognises the important role of non-governmental organisations in the promotion of all human rights and in humanitarian activities (...). It emphasises the importance of continued dialogue and co-operation between Governments and non-governmental organisations." (para 38; see also paras 73 and 82 of the Programme of Action and para 16 of the Statement of the International Human Rights Treaty Bodies). In his speech to the Third Committee on behalf of the Twelve, the Belgian representative recalled "the crucial role played by NGOs in the protection and promotion of human rights. Their contributions to daily efforts daily in favour of these rights are of paramount importance". It seems clear that NGOs should be party to the implementation of the World Conference's conclusions.

On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the difficulties which emerged during the Conference and the discussions held concerning NGO attendance at meetings of the Third Committee's working group, as well as the increasingly acute tensions existing between NGOs and the Sub-Commission's experts. This is the context in which an appraisal should be made of Decision 1993/214 of February 1993, whereby ECOSOC undertook to review arrangements concerning the consultation of NGOs.

It is true that, as the Vienna Forum demonstrated, there are serious problems among NGOs themselves, which should in particular make an effort of co-ordination. But at the same time an effort of clarification should be made by governments.

### III. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

On 20 December 1993 the General assembly decided by consensus (like the Third Committee earlier) to create a post of High Commissioner for Human Rights (Resolution 48/141).

This question was the only one the World Conference had assigned on a priority basis to the General Assembly (para 18 of the Programme of Action). Even so, immediately following Vienna few thought that the decision, described by some as historic, could be taken by the end of 1993. Still fresh in everyone's memory were the various fruitless attempts made along these lines ever since 1950; moreover strong opposition had been displayed at the Conference itself. Without doubt, therefore, the result achieved is a notable success. Here, too, an analysis needs to be made.

As one version of the draft Resolution followed another, the High Commissioner's mandate became increasingly general. Nevertheless, the main aspect was preserved, namely the High Commissioner's role of preventing human rights violations, in particular the possibility of establishing direct contacts with the governments concerned (see para 4 (f) and (g)). In practice, of course, much will depend on the personality and credibility of the person appointed to the post and the resources allocated to him or her.

It would also be worth taking a look at the proceedings of the Third Committee, in particular those of its working group, on this question. They proved to be an extraordinary laboratory bringing out the tendencies, divisions and forces - both old and new - currently in evidence in the UN. From the point of view of procedures and tactics, this was a perfect illustration of what was mentioned earlier with regard to the various groups (not forgetting the USA's "pace-forcing"). From the substantive point of view there arose a number of questions that can be expected to remain on the agenda (such as the "conditionality" of aid according to criteria relating to respect for human rights).

#### **IV. INDIVIDUAL NATIONAL SITUATIONS**

The trend already visible at the previous session was confirmed: on the basis of proposals by the Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly adopted a large number of resolutions on the human rights situation in individual countries (in addition to the cases considered under item "Advisory services").

**1. Afghanistan (Resolution 48/152)**

Special rapporteur: Mr Ermacora (Austria)  
[E/CN.4/1994/53]

**2. Cuba (Resolution 48/142)**

Special rapporteur: Mr Goth (Sweden)  
[E/CN.4/1994/51]

3. **El Salvador** (Resolution 48/149)

Independent expert: Mr Nikken (Venezuela)  
[E/CN.4/1994/11]

At its next session, the Commission is to decide whether to consider this country's situation under the item "Human rights violations" or under the item "Advisory services". In its Resolution, the General Assembly "notes that, [...] the human rights situation in El Salvador continues to evolve in a somewhat ambivalent fashion, since, on the one hand, there continue to be signs of improvement and, on the other hand, serious violations persist, particularly as regards the right to life, and the capacity of the judicial system to clarify and punish such violations continues to be unsatisfactory;" (§ 9).

4. **Haiti** (Resolution 48/151)

Special rapporteur: Mr Bruni Celli (Venezuela)  
[E/CN.4/1994/55]

5. **Iran** (Resolution 48/145)

Special rapporteur: Mr Galindo Pohl (El Salvador)  
[E/CN.4/1994/50]

6. **Iraq** (Resolution 48/144)

Special rapporteur: Mr van der Stoep (Netherlands)  
[E/CN.4/1994/58]

7. **Myanmar** (Resolution 48/150)

Special rapporteur: Mr Yokota (Japan)  
[E/CN.4/1994/57]

8. **Sudan** (Resolution 48/147)

Special rapporteur: Mr Biró (Hungary)  
[E/CN.4/1994/48]



**9. Former Yugoslavia (Resolution 48/153)**

Special rapporteur: Mr Mazowiecki (Poland)  
[E/CN.4/1994/3,4,5,6,8, and 47]

Among the situations considered by the Commission on Human Rights, the General Assembly did not adopt any resolutions in particular concerning **Equatorial Guinea, East Timor, Togo or Zaire**.

There was a draft resolution on **Kashmir** but, as a result of the resumption of talks between the two states concerned (India and Pakistan), the submission of this draft was postponed at the request of the Pakistani delegation.

No draft was submitted with regard to **China**. At the two previous sessions of the Commission on Human Rights, the draft resolution could not be put to the vote. In the General Assembly, the Western delegations from the West refrained from insisting on this matter so as to avoid compromising the negotiations on the post of High Commissioner.

As regards the human rights situation in **Guatemala**, the Commission on Human Rights is to decide whether to consider it, under the item "Human rights violations" or under the item "Advisory services".

As in 1992, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in **Estonia and Latvia** (48/155). The brevity and wording of the text may indicate that this question will no longer appear on the Assembly's agenda.

**V. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS**

The slenderness of the resources available for pursuing human rights activities is a major problem in the United Nations (as indeed in other international organisations) and may undermine the effectiveness and credibility of numerous projects or mechanisms. Even treaty committees are encountering serious obstacles which prevent them from functioning properly. This is particularly true of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture. Some improvements should result from General Assembly Resolution 47/111, which provides for the financing of these committees by funds drawn from the Organisation's ordinary budget. However, the amendments to the two conventions concerned still need to come into effect, but so far only a very small number of states have sent notifications of acceptance.

The World Conference took up a firm position on this question (paras 9-15 of the Programme of Action). This appeal seems to have been partly heard for, according to the information received so far, the following decisions have been taken: the budget of the Centre for Human Rights will be increased from \$35 to \$38 million; the sum of \$1.9 million will be allocated to it for follow-up to the Vienna Conference; and \$1.4 million will be drawn from the reserve fund for the High Commissioner.

These are encouraging signs, but clearly this positive trend must be maintained and accentuated.

## **VI. PREPARATION OF THE NEXT SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (GENEVA, 31 JANUARY - 11 MARCH 1994)**

The experts might review the agenda for the next session (Doc. E/CN.4/1994/1 and Add.1).

We would simply point out :

- \* that the Commission will receive the first thematic reports on the right to development (Doc. E/CN.4/1994/21), freedom of opinion and expression (Doc. E/CN.4/1994/33) and racism (Doc E.CN.4/1994/66);
- \* that the Commission will be presented with the report of the working group responsible for examining the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (Doc E/CN.4/1994/25).

## **VII. FINAL REMARKS**

In conclusion, many of the speeches delivered in the Third Committee prompt us to make a general observation.

The Vienna Declaration strongly reaffirms the universal nature of human rights. But it also contains the following sentence (para 5): "While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms."

It would be wrong for the Western side to regard this very balanced passage merely as the result of a compromise and, in particular, to play down its first part. Indeed, we deem it regrettable that any reference to particularities should be systematically dismissed as reflecting a relativistic approach, ie as a denial of the universal nature of human rights. True, the exercise is a dangerous one, but we are convinced that it is impossible - in the interests of the universality of human rights - to avoid considering how cultural diversity (in the broad sense) could be taken into account.

In order to be accepted and practised, human rights must be understood. Too dogmatic an approach - liable to give the impression of ignoring the concrete problems encountered by the individuals (not just the governments) concerned - does nothing to encourage this understanding or the open-mindedness it implies.

Of course, there can be no question of jeopardising respect for human rights or of providing certain leaders with a facile excuse. The objective is, indeed, to help the international principles of human rights to become progressively integrated into the legal, social and cultural standards rooted in every society.

