

responsible and increasingly committed hemispheric partner, and I believe that we stand to benefit from this partnership.

In recognizing the potential of this partnership, we must also recognize that Canada has a great deal to learn in order to avoid being marginalized in the development of our relationship in this hemisphere. The region's history, language and culture are very different from our own, and our understanding of its situation will influence the extent and success of our relationship.

Canada's foreign policy toward the region faces many challenges. Our approach to Latin America and the Caribbean must be consistent with our overall foreign policy objectives, which include poverty alleviation, the promotion of good governance, human rights, social stability, gender and racial equality, a sustainable environment, and international peace and stability. While the population is well-educated in comparison with that of other developing regions, profound social problems exist in this region that must be addressed at the source. Central among these is the unequal distribution of wealth and land. Resolution of these issues is essential if the population's future well-being is to be guaranteed.

In recent years, there have been positive political trends in Latin America. In the early 1980s, many countries were ruled by the military. Now almost all governments in the region have been democratically elected, based on open constitutional procedures. As these countries become more familiar with the democratic process, they are adjusting their political policies to meet international standards.

Work is being done by Latin American and Caribbean citizens to consolidate and strengthen democratic, judicial and human rights institutions. Canadian assistance has been and remains important in reinforcing these trends. Our emphasis has been placed on political transparency, with governments increasingly to be held accountable for their actions and performance. The military in most countries now shows a greater respect for civilian authority and has retreated to a more limited, proper role in society. Canada supports and is encouraged by this process of democratization. As with our work in Africa, it is imperative to remember that elections in themselves do not create democracy. It is incumbent on the donor countries to continue their support until a true democratic society is achieved. In fact, we anticipate the day when we learn from each other in this regard.

In the Commonwealth Caribbean, Canada has long-standing, strong ties with both the governments and the people. These ties have been based upon shared parliamentary and democratic traditions, common values, close personal contact with government leaders, extensive tourism and major involvement by Canada's chartered banks. We expect these ties to endure and strengthen in the