Canadian Centre
for Foreign Policy
Development

Centre canadien
pour le développement
de la politique étrangère

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CCFPD SUMMARY REPORT: THE AMERICAS

The changing political and economic climate in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past decades opened the door for Canada to play a bigger role in the region. The spread of relatively democratic regimes in Latin America, economic liberalisation, and more recently, the emergence of an active civil society have brought unprecedented opportunities and posed challenges for policy makers, including the need to reassess Canadian interests and priorities. Evidenced by the wide range of regional events hosted by Canada over these two years, Canadian engagement in the Hemisphere has grown rapidly as a result of these shifts:

- The XIII Ibero American Cumbre (Winnipeg, July 23 - August 8, 1999),
- The Conference of the Spouses of Heads of State and Government of the Americas (Ottawa, September 29 - October 1, 1999),
- The Free Trade Area for the Americas Trade Ministerial Meeting (Toronto, November 3 - 4, 1999),
- The Americas Business Forum (Toronto, November 1 - 2, 1999),
- The Organization of American States General Assembly (Windsor, June 4 - 6, 2000), and
- the upcoming Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, April 21 - 22, 2001).

(For more information on these events, please, visit: www.americas-canada.org.)

Ministers and Canadian officials, including David Kilgour (Secretary of State, Latin America and Africa), Marc Lortie (the Prime Minister's personal representative for the Summit of Americas), and George Hayunga (Assistant Deputy Minister, Americas), responsed from the outset the importance of civil society engagement in developing Canada's foreign policy toward the Hemisphere. In one of the series of Americas roundtables designed to solicit public views, George Hayunga pointed to the need "to broaden the policy circle beyond Ottawa and the traditional stakeholders" (Calgary, March 17, 1999). Mindful of political, diplomatic, institutional, and other constraints, Ministers and officials consistently signalled their willingness to listen and reflect public voices at the OAS General Assembly and in the agenda for the Quebec City Summit in April 2001, for example.

To help fulfil the government's commitment to public input, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD) engaged NGOs, experts, academics, labour, business people, parliamentarians, and the media from across the country to contribute thinking into the development of Canada's Hemisphere policy. Since March 1999, the CCFPD organised or funded nine roundtables on the Americas and commissioned a number of Policy Options Papers:

- Developing a Canadian Discussion on the Americas (Calgary, March 17, 1999) - webcast live and now archived at www.americas-canada.org (in partnership with by Design E Lab, McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology, Office University of Toronto and the Calgary Centre for Foreign Affairs),
- Democratization in the Americas (Halifax, July 5, 1999),
- Initiatives for Democratic Education in the Americas: Education and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (IDEA (Vancouver, July 15, 1999)),