

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary General,
Mr. Assistant Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen and Friends,

I am delighted to be in Santiago to lead the Canadian delegation to this 21st General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS).

I wish first of all to congratulate you on your election as President of the Assembly and to assure you of the full support of the Canadian delegation in the fulfilment of your heavy responsibilities. We very much appreciate the warm hospitality extended to us and the excellent conference arrangements that have been made for our meeting.

I should be grateful if you could convey to the Government and people of Chile and to the OAS Secretariat our deep appreciation.

The Canadian delegation is very pleased that this General Assembly is meeting here in Chile. Like Chile, Canada shares a strong commitment to the OAS even though we are a relatively new member. Our links in diverse fields, in trade, as Pacific Ocean partners, go back many years. Most importantly, the dedication of Canadians and Chileans to democratic values has strengthened these bonds even more.

Mr. President, this year marks Canada's second year as a full participant, but the Organization's second century. It is indeed appropriate that the OAS reaches this important anniversary with a full complement of 35 members.

This year we are delighted to welcome our Commonwealth partners, Belize and Guyana, to our midst. We are made stronger and more complete by their presence. We look forward to the time when the vision of the founders of the OAS for a universal hemispheric forum can be realized and Cuba will retake its place in the Organization as a full member of the hemispheric family.

One year is a short period in the history of the world's oldest regional institution. In the year since Canada joined the OAS, we truly have come to feel part of the hemispheric family. We have been touched by the warm welcome we have been given by our Latin American friends.

Joining with our Caribbean partners in the OAS strengthens even more a long and traditional relationship. Drawing on these ties, we can make a unique contribution to hemispheric community-building.

When the Prime Minister announced our decision to join the OAS, he said that Canada should at long last become a nation of the Americas, a full partner in the hemisphere. The partnership we