

A major player at the Summit of the Americas and similar international events today is civil society. This term covers not only non-governmental organizations but also trade unions, academics, professional associations, businesses, churches and individual citizens.

Canada believes that civil society must take a hand in weaving together what

Prime Minister



Jean Chrétien has called the *gran familia* (extended family) of the Americas. As the Prime Minister told the OAS General Assembly in 2000, "La gran familia means more than trade and commerce. It also means encouraging full and equal participation by all our citizens in the economic and political life of our countries."

# Civil

## Open doors

Canada has put a high priority on encouraging the active involvement of civil society in the Summit of the Americas. It gives support to many of the networks of groups that have emerged as democracy takes root, and that want to be part of the Summit process. The channel for their input is the Special Committee on Inter-American Summit Management. Last year the Committee opened its meetings to civil society participation under the guidance of chair Peter Boehm, Canada's Ambassador to the OAS and National Co-ordinator for the 2001 Summit of the Americas process.

One outcome of the 1998 Santiago Summit was the formation of the Citizen Participation network. A grouping of 900 organizations throughout the Hemisphere, the network is led by three NGOs: the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), Chile's Corporación Participa and the United States'

Esquel Group Foundation. Citizen Participation was active in the follow-up to Santiago, and has

presented a set of recommendations for the Plan of Action to be adopted in Québec.

The Government of Canada has funded the network's three lead groups and taken part in regular consultations with them, most recently in Miami this past January. Attending were Marc Lortie, Prime Minister Chrétien's personal representative for the Summit of the Americas, and Ambassador Boehm.

## Leaders' meetings, people's meetings

Shortly before the leaders' summit, several civil society groups are planning their own hemispheric gatherings in Québec City, with funding and support from Canada.

The most visible of the meetings is the Second People's Summit, carrying on a tradition started in Santiago in 1998. It is being organized by the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), an umbrella group of about 400 NGOs, including Canada's major trade unions.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is helping HSA with the logistics of staging the People's Summit. Its financial assistance is helping the Alliance cover site rental costs, and departmental officials meet regularly with HSA to provide advice on various issues.

Topping the list of issues is security. At previous international conferences, some Alliance member groups staged protest rallies that turned violent. DFAIT has made it

