

a regional organization or multilateral development bank. The SIRG, co-chaired at that time by the United States and Chile, carried out the substantial preparations for the second Summit of the Americas, in Santiago, Chile, in 1998.

The agenda for the 1998 Summit was first considered by foreign ministers at the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in Lima, Peru, in 1997. It included the following themes: education — the key to progress; preserving and strengthening democracy; justice and human rights; economic integration and free trade; and eradication of poverty and discrimination. Sustainable development, a Summit item in 1994, was addressed at the Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in 1996.

In preparing for the Summit in Santiago, Canada identified a number of priorities and carefully considered the views expressed by Canadians during consultations that took place in six Canadian cities in 1997. The theme of human rights and democracy continued to be a priority for Canada. During the summit process, Canada presented specific proposals to improve key aspects of the administration of justice in the Americas. Canada also placed indigenous issues as a distinct item on the agenda and stressed a need to ensure particular attention for gender equality and for human rights for women and people with disabilities.

In April 1998, the leaders of the 34 countries that had participated in Miami in 1994 met in Santiago to continue their dialogue and strengthen their co-operation. Canada's expanding leadership in the hemisphere was reflected in an invitation to host the third Summit of the Americas, which will be held in Quebec City from April 20 to 22, 2001.

Canada was active in all areas of discussion at the 1998 Summit of the Americas in Santiago. Among the issues addressed was how to combat the illicit drug trade. Leaders endorsed the creation of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), which was developed by an intergovernmental working group, chaired by Canada. This mechanism allows countries to review their progress in the fight against drugs. As part of the MEM initiative, the reports of OAS member states will be presented at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

Also at the Summit in Santiago, Canada's leadership role in trade liberalization was recognized when it was announced that Canada would chair negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) for the first 18 months. Canada believes that the creation of the FTAA is important both to the economic prosperity of the hemisphere and to the consolidation of democracy in the region.

In preparing for the Summit in Quebec City, Canada struck a balanced agenda which addresses three main themes: strengthening democracy, creating prosperity, and realizing human potential. In addition, Canada has focused on the opportunities provided by new information technologies and "connectivity."