

shared with Mexican government, politicians and NGOs. More concretely, Canada might support some pilot or model experiences in government/NGO dialogue with regard to multilateral agencies and foreign policy.

The objective of the activities would be to encourage greater respect and openness between Mexican officials and NGOs, while reinforcing Canadian/Mexican NGO and governmental understanding. If successful some consensus might emerge on key problematics facing government and NGOs alike and ways of dealing with them.

Three areas suggested in interviews for treatment in such four-way conversations are:

- 1) development, macro-economic policy and the role of International Financial Institutions.
- 2) law and participation, civil participation in law-making and law and regulation of civil society organizations
- 3) human rights and human rights organizations

Applying some aspects of the November, 1996 Aboriginal Economic Roundtable to the field of non-governmental relations and the state and responding to ideas of experienced Mexican and Canadian non-governmental bodies, roundtables (involving four or in some cases five sectors) might be organized.

In each case, with direct or indirect Canadian government support, a Canadian and a Mexican partner organization might be invited to convene and prepare a limited and invitational consultation and a consultative process (involving problem clarification, establishment of priorities for discussion and reference/preparatory material). Adequate financial support could ensure proper preparation, translation and reporting of the conversations.

8. Aid for equity and civil society

It is therefore incumbent that Canada move toward an assistance programme aimed at reducing poverty and increasing participation of the currently marginalized in all aspects of Mexican life.

Given the focus of this paper, the following suggestions for starting places would seem most appropriate:

- * a process of programme development which involves and strengthens Mexican organizations as part of the planning and elaboration of the programme.
- * a process which might begin with bringing consortia of Canadian and Mexican development organizations together to develop agreements and working rules of relationship and partnership, not unlike the carefully developed collaboration between Canadian and Cuban non-governmental organizations. Encouragement might be provided to incipient collaboration in social development between poor people's organizations in Mexico and Canada.
- * initial elements of support for locally and partnership-sourced organizational development, training and capacity building of civil society organizations, ngos, etc. A priority should be support for the democracy-building activities of the Civic Alliance. The encouragement of democratic and independent trade unions is also important.