

pursue many elements of human security. In the information age, new communications tools, in particular, should, can, and have been used effectively in the service of our goals.

The Hemispheric Dimension

In practical terms, all of these elements have resulted in more focus and activism in Canadian foreign policy on some key human security problems. We have brought this perspective to our engagement in the hemisphere. In many ways, human security concerns — and collective hemispheric responses to them — are already part of the regional agenda.

In this regard, the Santiago Summit was a milestone event. The four themes of the Summit - improving access to education, eradicating poverty and discrimination, strengthening and preserving democracy, justice and human rights and ensuring economic prosperity reflect a distinctly human-centred approach to hemispheric affairs. Our leaders have made these themes a collective priority. This demonstrates that we are already on the road to putting human security at the head of hemispheric concerns. Canada will host the next Summit. We are working actively with our hemispheric partners in translating the commitments made at the Summit into concrete progress.

Hemispheric security concerns have an increasingly human dimension. Strong regional support for efforts to ban anti-personnel mines vividly illustrates the human security agenda in action. Thirty-three member states of the OAS have signed the Convention, and 14 have ratified it. Concrete efforts are under way to make the objectives of the Convention a reality in our own neighbourhood. Central American countries have made a firm commitment to eradicate landmines by the year 2000.

Canada and Mexico are working together in this area. This week, we organized a regional landmines conference aimed at taking stock and redoubling regional efforts. We were very pleased to have the active participation of civil society. The partnership that led to the Ottawa Convention is indispensable in realizing its goals.

The proliferation of small arms, like landmines, is a global security problem but one with an undeniable regional dimension. The proliferation of light, cheap weapons — the instrument of choice of terrorists, drug lords and criminals — is having a devastating impact on our societies. And it is the most vulnerable in our societies who suffer most.

Here too we are making progress. Last year, OAS member states signed the Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Material — a Mexican-led initiative. The first of its kind in the world, it targets the illegal trade in firearms through more effective controls on the legal trade. This is proof of our willingness and capacity to take collective action against crime and violence in the Americas — a very real threat to ordinary people.

We need to go further to address other aspects through practical approaches tailored to real problems on the ground: disarming and reintegrating child soldiers; taking weapons out of circulation in societies that are saturated with them; and retraining and re-equipping people in these societies so that they can lead peaceful and productive lives.

Stable and open societies provide a firm foundation for enhancing human security. Hemispheric leaders affirmed this at Santiago with their emphasis on democracy, justice and human rights. Three areas of focus are peacebuilding, integrating all sectors into the political, economic and social lives of our societies, and strengthening democratic institutions.

Societies emerging from conflict need particular attention. Through our peacebuilding initiative, Canada is supporting a number of projects in Central America aimed at building local capacity to manage differences without violence, and creating the conditions for sustainable peace. Today, Foreign Secretary Green and I announced a joint Canada-Mexico program with the Pan American Health Organization to assist landmine victims in Central America.