

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's future is inextricably linked to that of our partners in the Americas — geographically, economically and politically. Together, we stand at a significant moment in our common history as we face the collective challenge of transforming the region's political, economic and social promise into a more prosperous, secure and freer future for all citizens.

In April 2001, the presidents and prime ministers of the 34 democratically elected governments of the Western Hemisphere will meet in Quebec City (Canada) at the Third Summit of the Americas to chart a common course for the new millennium. As chair of the Summit, Canada has played a leading role in developing the agenda and providing support for preparatory activities. These efforts represent a major undertaking requiring co-operation among federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments, as well as information sharing and consultation with the private sector, Indigenous peoples and civil society organizations.

The first two Summits of the Americas — held in Miami (United States) in 1994 and in Santiago (Chile) in 1998 — fostered comprehensive, practical co-operation on a range of issues of common concern. In Miami, leaders sought to strengthen hemispheric partnerships in order to encourage the advancement of mutual interests, including peace, democracy, prosperity and social justice. Their aim was to channel the momentum created by the convergence of democratic values and a new spirit of economic liberalization in the region into a plan of action with 23 initiatives grouped under the following themes:

- Preserving and Strengthening the Community of Democracies in the Americas
- Promoting Prosperity Through Economic Integration and Free Trade
- Eradicating Poverty and Discrimination in the Hemisphere
- Guaranteeing Sustainable Development and Conserving the Natural Environment for Future Generations

Following the Miami Summit, the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) was created to monitor and manage follow-up and implementation of Summit initiatives. Implementation of each of the 23 initiatives contained in the Miami Plan of Action was co-ordinated either by a specific country, a regional or international organization or a multilateral development bank.

Planning and preparation for the Second Summit of the Americas was carried out by the SIRG, and in 1998 leaders of the Americas met again in Santiago (Chile) to examine four key themes¹:

- Education: The Key to Progress

¹ The issue of sustainable development — a 1994 Summit of the Americas agenda item — was addressed at a separate Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz (Bolivia) in December 1996.