

American economies and, having first tried to negotiate sectoral trade agreements, embraced Canada-U.S. free trade. This was followed in 1994 by the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, which added Mexico and extended the disciplines.

Not only did NAFTA protect Canada's effective access to the American market, it also gave concrete expression to a new, post-Cold War resurgence in interest in the Americas. It is no coincidence that the 1990s also saw Canada join the Organization of American States, negotiate free trade with Chile, unite with the other democratic countries of the hemisphere in the Summit of the Americas process, and lead the initial phase of the FTAA negotiations. In recent years, we have negotiated a free trade agreement with Costa Rica, and we are currently in negotiations to the same end with four other Central American countries, the four European Free Trade Area countries (Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) and Singapore. In addition, we are in exploratory discussions with CARICOM (the Caribbean Community), the Dominican Republic, and the five countries of the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela). We have also signed a large number of other economic agreements (e.g. dual taxation treaties, investment protection and promotion agreements) that complement our trade agenda. None of this has come at the expense of multilateralism. In fact, the most recent multilateral trade negotiations (the Uruguay Round) were pursued simultaneously with Canada-U.S. and NAFTA negotiations. Rather, these activities represented a new willingness to push the envelope at all levels. In addition to pursuing "classical" free trade, we concluded side agreements that broadened the scope of the negotiations to embrace cooperation on environmental protection and on labour standards, areas not previously discussed in such forums.

THE MULTILATERAL TRACK

The WTO system of agreements is the cornerstone of the **multilateral** trading system. It covers all of our important trading relationships and governs Canada's trade with partners in the absence of a regional or bilateral agreement. In fact, WTO rules can also complement bilateral rules, providing a minimum