

# Strengthening Democracy

From April 20 to 22, 2001, in Quebec City, Canada hosted the Third Summit of the Americas, a meeting of the Western Hemisphere's 34 democratically elected Heads of State and Government.

Summits of the Americas are held to discuss the state of the region and to devise a plan of action for guiding governments in their efforts to work collectively in improving the lives of the peoples of the Hemisphere. The Quebec City Summit addressed a wide variety of issues, including democracy, human rights, justice, the rule of law, human security, civil society, gender equality, Indigenous peoples, the environment, migration, health, education, cultural diversity and trade—all issues of concern to Canada and to the wider community of the Americas.

The Quebec City Summit resulted in a Declaration and detailed Plan of Action, making major commitments and launching an impressive set of initiatives. These were grouped under 18 major headings, all of which contribute to strengthening democracy, creating prosperity, and realizing human potential.

The quintessential achievement of the Quebec City Summit, the "Democracy Clause," stated that respect for democracy is the *sine qua non* for participation in the Summit process. Foreign Ministers then negotiated an Inter-American Democratic Charter, which sent a powerful signal that democracy is the fundamental defining value for our Hemisphere. Together, the Clause and the Charter set new standards forming the basis for further cooperation by countries of the Americas. Whatever differences may arise, all agree that democratic institutions and practices are vital to progress.



Signature page of the Declaration of Quebec City