

Canada and the Summit of the Americas Process: Miami — Santiago — Quebec City

In December 1994, for the first time in the history of the Americas, the 34 heads of state and government of the Western Hemisphere's democracies met to discuss common challenges and to seek mutually beneficial solutions. Called the Summit of the Americas, this meeting in Miami set in motion a dynamic process of collaborative action that has brought increased political, economic and social stability to the people of the Americas.

The summit process has contributed significantly to revitalized multilateralism in the region. A new agenda was born and the leaders of Americas' democracies agreed to meet on a regular basis to refine and develop further co-operative action in support of fundamental objectives. As the process continues, the leaders are sharing accumulated experiences, forging a common understanding and agreeing upon mandates for collective action.

In the seven years since the Summit in Miami, the process has been characterized by both the deepening of commitment to shared principles and the measured development of institutional elements. The principles of the process dictate that summit participants shall include nations with democratically elected governments, operating with free market economies. Its institutional elements are the mechanisms responsible for preparations, implementation and follow-up, principally the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).

One of the fundamental objectives of the first Summit of the Americas was to reorganize inter-American relations in light of new political, economic and social conditions transforming the hemisphere. This was made possible by an unprecedented spirit of co-operation. Leaders believed that strong partnerships would encourage the advancement of mutual interests, including democracy, economic integration and social justice. Their aim was to channel the momentum created by the convergence of political and economic values in the region.

Leaders endorsed a declaration that focused on four major themes: preserving and strengthening the community of democracies of the Americas; promoting prosperity through economic integration and free trade; eradicating poverty and discrimination in the hemisphere; and guaranteeing sustainable development and conserving the natural environment for future generations. Leaders also endorsed an action plan containing a program of 23 initiatives covering the four themes.

After the first Summit, the SIRG was created to monitor and manage follow-up and implementation on action items. Implementation of the 23 initiatives contained in the plan of action was co-ordinated either by a specific country or by