

4.4 ODA Disbursement

The 1989 policy review led to an increase of the proportion of bilateral ODA disbursed to the region as a whole. The region currently accounts for 18% of total Canadian bilateral assistance disbursements. Our international assistance presence in the region now, however, seems too modest when measured against Canadian interests and progress achieved in political and economic good governance, factors which are increasingly recognized as crucial elements of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty.

Active and dynamic bilateral assistance programmes would be appropriate in light of the region's:

- improved commitment to sound policies (rewarding countries for their efforts and recognizing that bilateral assistance is likely to be that much more effective because of this commitment);
- growing importance as a trade and investment partner (including the opportunity to prepare countries for the obligations and adjustments of the NAFTA);
- importance to Canada's international environmental agenda, especially the development of a sustainable forestry practices convention and the protection of the planet's biodiversity (as regards the latter, Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Chile all contain priority areas for conservation according to the World Bank);
- continuing need to address poverty alleviation, with success in this regard reinforcing the good progress being made on political and economic reform.

The amount of bilateral ODA disbursed in the region as a whole should increase significantly from its current level. Within the region, assistance should gradually be directed more towards those countries which are most committed to the implementation of sustainable development policies. For example, Mexico has launched a vast social program call "Solidarity" to bring clean water, paved roads and schools to the poor. Our aid to Mexico is marginal at present. This should change. Technical assistance could be directed towards areas of shared interest, such as environmental protection and the reinforcement of democratic development and civil institutions.