

back to 1909. Our mission in London obtained full diplomatic status in 1926. Canada's next official diplomatic mission abroad opened in Washington in 1927; this was followed by Paris in 1928 and Tokyo in 1929. Today, we have over 130 missions and 30 satellite offices around the world in major cities ranging alphabetically from Abidjan to Zagreb.

Canada maintains a strong presence in multilateral forums such as the UN and the World Trade Organization. In 1927, Canada took a seat for the first time on the Council of the League of Nations. In 1945, Canada was among the 50 countries that founded the United Nations at the San Francisco Conference. In the last decade alone, Canada signed or ratified 165 multilateral and 266 bilateral treaties. It also joined 12 major new international/regional organizations or processes.

The commitment of Canadians to the UN continues to run deep. A 1998 survey indicates that 79 percent of Canadians are familiar with the UN, and that 9 out of 10 want Canada to play an even larger role in the organization. Canada is recognized internationally for taking its UN responsibilities seriously. We have been elected seven times to a seat on the UN Security Council.

At the same time we have fostered many close bilateral ties and regional affiliations. For example, Canada is the only country in the world belonging simultaneously to the G-8, the Commonwealth and La Francophonie.

Canada and the United States enjoy the benefits of having the world's largest bilateral trading relationship. Today, a major policy priority for Canada is making our close ties with the United States even closer. In fact, in 1833, the Consulate of the United States was the first foreign consulate to be opened in Halifax.

Today, all eyes have turned to the talks on creating a hemispheric Free Trade Area of the Americas. This would be the world's largest free trade zone, with 800 million people and a gross domestic product in excess of \$10.6 trillion.

Canada's flexible, multi-faceted approach to international relations enables us to assist developing countries and countries in transition. We give these countries the tools to eventually meet their own needs, by providing assistance in the form of goods, services, the transfer of knowledge and skills, and financial assistance. In this way, we strive to be a compassionate humanitarian donor pursuing sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is the federal government agency directly responsible for delivering Canadian aid. CIDA supports projects in over 100 countries, including the nations of Central and Eastern