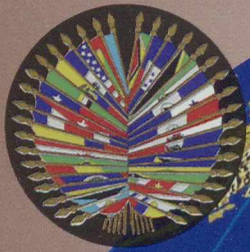


Canada at the OAS

PROMOTING HUMAN SECURITY IN A HEMISPHERIC FORUM



In 1990, when Canada decided to join the Organization of American States after many years of observer status, a powerful factor was hemispheric change. A wave of democracy had recently washed through the Americas, toppling dictatorships of long standing. Along with political freedom, this largely peaceful revolution had brought new possibilities for hemispheric co-operation in such areas as environmental protection, drug control and human rights. It had also sparked economic reform, creating new market prospects for Canadian business in the Americas. Surveying this changed landscape, Canada decided it could no longer afford to be outside the OAS.

Over its nine years of membership, Canada's policies within the OAS have sought to make the most of the new social and economic

opportunities in the Americas. A current example is its promotion of a "people first" approach by the OAS, consistent with Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy's

foreign policy emphasis on human security.

Earlier, one of Canada's first initiatives after joining the OAS was the creation of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, which supports the promotion and strengthening of democratic processes and institutions in member states. ●

At the 1999 OAS General Assembly in Guatemala, Canada gave priority to promotion of democratic development, human rights and good governance in the Americas.

- Canada backed a "civil society" resolution, which calls on the Organization to clear a procedural path for private-sector and non-governmental organizations to get involved in OAS work.
- Canada encouraged OAS members that had not yet done so to ratify the Ottawa Convention on landmines (officially known as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction). Twenty-four of the 34 OAS members have ratified the Convention.
- Canada called for a "dialogue session" of foreign ministers to look at the human security aspects of the hemispheric drug problem, as part of the Drug Dialogue launched early this year.
- Minister Axworthy signed the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions. Under its terms, OAS member nations undertake to keep each other informed about new acquisitions of conventional weapons.
- Canada participated in efforts to reform and renew the OAS.