

I would like to express my gratitude for the privilege of addressing this first regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States. This occasion has also afforded me the pleasure of seeing Latin America again, visiting for the first time this beautiful city of San José and experiencing the warm hospitality which is traditional in Costa Rica. I have listened with great interest and attention to the distinguished speakers who have outlined clearly the problems and aspirations we share in this hemisphere.

Last year we explained to the General Assembly the philosophy and thinking underlying the new orientation of Canadian foreign policy, referring particularly to my government's decision to intensify relations with our fellow countries in Latin America. This policy decision was prompted not only by a greater Canadian awareness of the Latin American fact, but also by our growing community of interests and the recognition that Canada must play a fuller part in the development of the hemisphere. We would like to translate these desires into practice by associating ourselves now with Latin American efforts in the area of social and economic development.

My intention in these brief remarks is not to set forth the various types of aid or the amounts we allot for development. For the moment I merely wish to assure you that we are directing an increasing proportion of our development assistance budget to countries in this hemisphere and that we have already visited several countries in order to identify the priorities of the governments concerned.

The goals we had set for intensifying our relations with Latin America are well on the way to realization. For example, we hope that negotiations now in progress will result in Canada's admission this year to several inter-American organizations.

We have discussed with the authorities of the Pan American Health Organization our role and obligations within this organization, and we expect that a formal Canadian application for membership will be submitted within a few weeks. We in Canada have a very high regard for the work of this organization and are looking forward to taking a full part in its activities.

Preparations for Canadian membership in the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Sciences are also at an advanced stage. We had the honour of welcoming the institute's Director-General in Canada last year, and I had the pleasure of visiting him during my stay in San José. Our conversations confirmed to me that the institute would be a great help in the work we are trying to do in Latin America, since a large part of the Canadian effort is in the form of technical assistance in agriculture. We would like to contribute as much as possible to the work of the institute, and the information and services which would be made available through membership would help us to apply our aid programme more effectively.