

## A Hemispheric Framework for Democracy

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Canada has been a consistently strong voice for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, peace-building, human security, and the advancement of democratic values in the Hemisphere. Canadians can feel pride, and confidence for the future, in knowing that their values are shared throughout the Hemisphere. The willingness of countries in the region to adopt the Democracy Clause and create the Democratic Charter was unprecedented. The Charter has been tested several times since its adoption in September 2001, and has quickly become a key feature of the inter-American architecture. The existence of the Charter led to an Organization of American States (OAS) process in Haiti that prevented further deterioration in that country's situation. In Venezuela, Charter invocation signalled the Hemisphere's zero tolerance for coups and opened a dialogue led by OAS Secretary General César Gaviria during more recent tensions in that country. The Charter was also evoked in 2002 by the Nicaraguan government in its fight against corruption, and it served as a guiding force towards the peaceful resolution of tensions in Bolivia in early 2003. Each incident has demonstrated that the framework is a sturdy one. Not only has there been a greater shift towards democracy in much of the Hemisphere, but a stronger commitment exists to uphold democracy, realize its full potential and address any threat to its viability.

## Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Canada places the protection and promotion of human rights at the forefront of engagement with the Americas. It continues to play an active role in promoting human rights in the Hemisphere.

The Quebec City Summit Plan of Action mandated concrete measures to strengthen the inter-American human rights system, particularly through efforts to support the functioning of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. These measures have been carried out successfully. Canada was pleased to introduce the OAS resolution encouraging member states to ensure that both key hemispheric human rights institutions be given adequate resources to perform their duties.

## Justice, Rule of Law and Security of the Individual

The Summit of the Americas process affords jurists throughout the Hemisphere the opportunity to exchange ideas on how to combat crime while respecting the rule of law and ensuring the security of the individual. The Summit process also serves as a catalyst, increasing awareness of the richness of the Hemisphere's legal and judicial systems while enhancing the effectiveness of the multilateral approach to realizing the potential of each system.

Ongoing initiatives seek better communication among hemispheric experts in jurisprudence and penal systems. With better understanding of the systems of each member country, the level of cooperation improves and judicial experts can respond more appropriately to diverse demands for assistance. In addition, democracy is strengthened as justice is more accessible to citizens and government effectiveness is enhanced. As a direct outcome of the Summit, Canada is actively working through the Justice Studies Centre of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, to advance judicial reform in the region.