



In late March 1997, the Executive Committee approved for release a consultation paper on the first, long-term, comprehensive, integrated human resources strategy for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Immediately thereafter, the consultation paper, signed by Gordon Smith and Robert Wright, was submitted to the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Committee of Senior Officials (COSO) La Relève Plans Review Sub-committee, and all central agencies. An electronic version of the draft was sent to every employee of DFAIT over Signet and was published with other departmental HR plans on the La Relève Task Force's CD ROM in early July, 1997.

The paper contained over 100 specific commitments to action, dealing with both community and horizontal mission-critical issues. The document is a public promise of our commitment to build and sustain a new culture within DFAIT.

We have made considerable progress on several fronts since we released the consultation paper, and we have suffered some delays as well. The following sections set out some of the highlights of the past year.

1.1 CONSULTATIONS

The paper acknowledged that the HR strategy was a management-driven first draft and that it could be completed only through full consultation with our stakeholders. We launched an intense consultation effort during April and May, 1997. The Deputies met in April with the Clerk and the COSO La Relève Plans Review Sub-committee to explain the strategy. Senior officers of the Human Resources Development Bureau visited many of the missions around the world to discuss the HR strategy with all employees. All Directors General and Directors were invited to briefings on the strategy. Discussions were initiated with PAFSO, with central agencies and with our portfolio partners on key initiatives.

These initial meetings do not constitute full consultation, but they did help us see what we need to do. In FY 1998-99, we will engage all of our employees and other stakeholders in interactive, meaningful and sustained discussion and involvement as the HR strategy evolves and implementation begins. We have established formal mechanisms for internal consultations on all key HR issues and have begun to lay the ground for integrated business and HR planning at the bureau level. We will soon launch special consultations in relation to specific initiatives, such as the move to a full competencies-based HR management regime.

Generally, two themes emerged from our initial round of employee consultations. First, some groups of employees either could not see themselves in the strategy or found the treatment of their issues incomplete. Second, the promises of ameliorative action in the strategy have raised their expectations of management to an unprecedented level, yet a