

Address by the Honourable Javier Pérez de Cuéllar President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru

It is an honour for me in my capacity as Prime Minister to represent President Valentín Paniagua, who has been unable to leave the country owing to constitutional business. I am equally honoured to be the spokesperson of the Peruvian people, who, through their democratic will, have been able to defeat the darkness of dictatorship and corruption and re-establish the rule of law in the country. The fairness, freedom and transparency of the April 8 elections bear witness to this and are permitting Peruvians to start building their well-being on the basis of liberty and democracy.

The leaders of the countries of this continent have gathered here in Quebec, a lively cultural city that so generously welcomes us today, to reaffirm democracy, human rights and social justice, and to seal a solidarity pact to promote development and a better quality of life for all citizens.

For our citizens to exercise their right to democracy in public and daily life, for our democratic institutions to be increasingly representative, and for freedom to mark the boundary between the power of the state and the individual, it is indispensable to share a common democratic conscience. Today, at this event, Canada symbolizes the democratic conscience of the continent.

The existence of this democratic conscience is one of the signs of our times. Our civil societies identify with the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, justice and equitable development. In the Americas, this development of individual and social conscience has created new social and cultural conditions for cooperation among our peoples and for a stronger inter-American system.

Democracy in the Americas has evolved positively over the last two decades, although not without alarms or crises. Almost all our peoples live under democratic systems and are crusading today to preserve freedom and improve their democratic institutions.

As well, our governments have made significant headway in laws and institutions to protect democracy. One undisputed historical reality that supports this statement is that no movement and no government that has, in recent years, attempted to curtail the right of its people to democracy has been able to fully entrench itself. On the contrary, the will to democracy has prevailed. This is an encouraging sign of our times.

Today, the inter-American system has a set of rules, values, principles and mechanisms to protect democracy that make up the international legal system.

Considerable progress has been made since the first Summit in 1994. The approval and application of OAS Resolution 1080 has made for concerted action in cases where the democratic process has been abruptly interrupted. Although its application has not