

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today that Canada's application for the accreditation of a Permanent Observer to the Organization of American States having been approved by the Permanent Council of the OAS, a Canadian Permanent Observer Mission to the OAS will be opened in Washington in the near future. The Canadian Permanent Observer will be of Ambassadorial rank.

The opening of this Canadian mission to the OAS marks an important step toward furthering and strengthening Canada's relations with Latin America and with inter-American institutions. It should facilitate the rapid development of Canada's relations with countries of the Americas and serve to improve our knowledge and understanding of the Organization of American States and of Latin American institutions.

In announcing this new development, Mr. Sharp recalled that in its foreign policy paper on Latin America, published in June, 1970, the Government stated Canada's intention to pursue closer and more effective relations with individual hemispheric countries and with selected inter-American institutions. To facilitate this and to enable it to follow developments in this area on a systematic basis, the Government indicated its intention of establishing a formal link between Canada and these institutions of which the OAS is the foremost.

In the same process of a systematic strengthening of relations, both bilaterally and multilaterally, with Latin American countries, Canadian membership in the Inter-American Development Bank, which is currently under final consideration, would be another major aspect of the reorientation of our policy and of our interest in the economic and social progress of Latin America and the Caribbean. For similar reasons Canada joined the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) as a full member in 1971 and is applying for full membership in the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA). Membership in other OAS specialized organizations and inter-American institutions is also being explored.

Bilaterally, progress is also being made in following up the first meeting of the Canada-Mexico Ministerial Committee which was held in Ottawa in October, 1971. The bilateral technical assistance programmes of the Canadian International Development Agency are also contributing very substantially to the achievement of our objectives in relations with Latin American countries.

The status of Permanent Observer represents an innovation in the OAS organizational framework. It was approved by the OAS General Assembly in April, 1971, which instructed the Permanent Council to work out the terms and conditions of this new status. That task has been completed and non-member American states and non-American states which participate in programs of the OAS can now be granted this privilege. Submitted on January 21 last, Canada's application was the first to be received by the OAS.