

Although Canada has long enjoyed close relations with the United States and the Caribbean nations, historically it has been less engaged in Latin American affairs. All that changed in the early 1990s. Why? According to Paul Durand, Director General of DFAIT's Latin American and Caribbean Bureau, the decisive new factor was a political and economic revolution in the Americas in the 1980s—one comparable to that in Europe: "Military dictatorships gave way to democratic governments, closed economies had become open, and relationships between these countries and their neighbour to the north had become less antagonistic. In short, the reasons for staying out had evaporated and the reasons for getting in were compelling." The new era began officially in 1990, when Canada signed the Charter of the Organization of American States.

# Canada IN THE Americas

THE LINKS  
MULTIPLY

### Milestones since 1990

- The signing of trade framework agreements with four regional groups: the Central American nations, CARICOM, (the English-speaking Caribbean), the MERCOSUR nations (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and the Andean Community. These agreements provide a framework to enhance trade and investment flows.
- The start of negotiations, currently chaired by Canada, on the Free Trade Area of the Americas. If implemented as scheduled in 2005, the FTAA will involve 34 countries with a population of 700 million people and a combined GDP of \$10 trillion.

### Regional security

- Piece by piece, Canada and its hemispheric neighbours have been bolting together a system of regional security, now defined as protection against both external and internal threats to democracy.
- Also in play is an important new concept embodied in the Declaration of Santiago, which calls for an immediate response by OAS members to the overthrow of a democratic government in a member state.
- Latin American countries have been strong supporters of Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy's human security approach to regional security. This takes as its point of departure the impact on individuals of threats such as landmines and the illicit drug trade.

### Political ties

- Political links between Canada and its hemispheric neighbours have multiplied at all levels and now include regular summit meetings of presidents and prime ministers of the hemisphere.

Paul Durand says one reason these relationships are flourishing is because industrially and economically, Canada and the hemispheric community are a good fit.

"This is a unique regional relationship for Canada," says Durand. "Other nations have their regional neighbourhoods. This one is ours. We belong in it." ●

## Canada returns the favour



Addressing the Mexican Senate in April, Prime Minister Chrétien linked the impressive line-up of hemispheric events in Canada in the coming two years to the strengthening of ties between this country and its neighbours in the Americas.

"The warm welcome I receive wherever I go in the hemisphere is a testament to that," said Mr. Chrétien. "Canada will be returning the favour on a number of occasions over the next two years."

*As a sign of Canada's expanding relationship with its fellow nations of the hemisphere, our country will host a series of major events within the next two years.*

**The XIII Pan American Games** will run from July 23 to August 8, 1999, in Winnipeg. Attracting 5000 athletes from 42 nations along with 2000 coaches, trainers and supporting staff, the Games will be the largest celebration of sport and culture ever held in Canada, and the third-largest athletic competition ever for North America.

**The Conference of Spouses of Heads of State and Government of the Americas** is the latest in a series launched by the First Ladies of the Central Americas in the 1980s as a forum in which to share experiences and co-ordinate activities. The themes for the 1999 meeting will be investment in childhood development and women's health.

**The Free Trade Area of the Americas Trade Ministerial Meeting** convenes in Toronto early in November 1999. Canada has been chairing the FTAA negotiations during their first critical year and will be pushing to maintain the momentum of negotiations.

Running parallel with the FTAA negotiations will be the fifth annual meeting of the **Americas Business Forum**, scheduled for October 30–31 in Toronto. The Forum is the main channel through which businesses in the Americas contribute to negotiations on hemispheric free trade. Canada is co-ordinating this year's meeting.

**The OAS General Assembly** in June 2000 will be the Organization's first assembly of the new millennium. It will take place in Windsor and will mark Canada's 10th year of OAS membership.

Hemispheric leaders have accepted Prime Minister Chrétien's invitation to hold the **Third Summit of the Americas** in Québec City in 2001. Heads of state and government will consider how they can work together to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of their peoples.

## THE AMERICAS ARE COMING TO CANADA