

determine an appropriate role for the OAS, including strengthening its institutional structure in this area. As one of the first steps, Canada will be hosting a meeting of regional experts in environmentally sound technologies in Canada later this year. We have also had a Canadian expert in to talk to the OAS about the "greening" of organizations, a concept with which we have had much success in Canada. We intend to pursue this concept at the OAS in the coming year. In keeping with our leadership on the Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada is pleased to offer Montreal as the host city for the Permanent Secretariat for this Convention. The Government of Canada is prepared to provide substantial financial assistance to set up this Permanent Secretariat and we ask fellow OAS members to support Montreal's bid.

An area in which the OAS has always been active, and indeed in which it would appear to have a comparative advantage, is in the development of multilateral legal instruments. Many subjects have been covered by OAS conventions, including human rights, violence against women, forced disappearances, and serving sentences abroad. And it is precisely because these instruments deal with such important issues that Canada has suggested that the OAS develop a more defined methodology for their consideration and development. We believe this will not only rationalize the process, but also result in instruments of more impeccable quality.

Summit of the Americas

Another important event this year for Canada, other countries of the region and the OAS was the Summit of the Americas, hosted by U.S. President Clinton in December 1994. This was a very productive hemispheric meeting, which resulted in a range of national and multilateral commitments, as outlined in the Summit Declaration of Principles and Action Plan.

Canada was an active participant in this process. In addition to promoting a number of thematic issues - free trade, human rights, democratic development, the fight against the drug trade, and sustainable development - Canada had two central concerns. One was to ensure that all countries - big and small - were given an opportunity to contribute. The other was to ensure that the OAS and other regional organizations were incorporated into the process.

The OAS emerged from the Summit with a clear endorsement as the primary forum for hemispheric dialogue and co-operation in a variety of spheres, and a paramount role in implementing many areas of the Action Plan. It is imperative now that the OAS rise to the challenge and prove itself capable of responding to the needs and priorities identified by the leaders of the hemisphere.