

**At the Third Summit of the Americas, the focus will be on people. The aim is for leaders attending the Summit to endorse a Declaration and a Plan of Action relevant to the real concerns of citizens throughout the Hemisphere. The leaders are determined to meet expectations by adopting a coherent agenda for co-operation on political, economic and social issues.**

Hemispheric leaders know that elections are only a start in strengthening democracy, and that many states still need to consolidate the progress made so far. The Summit will provide an opportunity for discussion of practical, effective ways to reinforce the other elements of an open, democratic environment. On the agenda are measures that would provide more support for member states to promote and protect human rights, and to apply the rule of law consistently.

To be considered are ways to make government institutions more transparent and responsive in their dealings with citizens. Leaders will ponder how to nurture national and regional institutions, especially those that support human rights or promote gender equality. They will examine how to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples and minorities of African descent—a step that is vital to creating more democratic societies. The intention is to take democratization to the practical level.

Respect for the rule of law is at the heart of all democracies. Along with constructing the framework for a democratic political system, countries are seeking to improve their administration of justice. The search is under way for practical measures that would help make judicial systems more impartial and independent. By co-operating on upgrading their legal and judicial systems, states can demonstrate their shared commitment to democratic values.

Leaders coming to Québec City have a growing awareness of the role of civil society in any democratic environment. They appreciate that strengthening democracy goes beyond developing the institutions of government and the legal system. Strong democracies depend on vibrant civil societies,



At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 114 heads of state pose for a group photo.

where people come together in community organizations and in groups based on shared interests and values.

Summit participants are committed to engaging and increasing the capacity of civil society. A key question is how states can work together to support the emergence of independent voices across the Americas. Leaders will look at measures that encourage communities and groups to further democracy together.

## Creating prosperity

The Summit process has always emphasized the value of reducing barriers to trade. Much work has already been carried out to reach an agreement on creating a Free Trade

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Four-year-old Edul Ruiz collects trash from a basket in La Chureca dump in Managua, Nicaragua, in February 2000. To earn an average of \$2.00 to \$3.00 dollars a day, hundreds of people work at the dump sifting through trash in search of glass and paper for recycling. They enlist the help of their children.



Thousands of dissidents disappeared after arrest during the 1970s and 1980s, when Chile was under military rule. In August 2000, relatives hold their portraits in a celebration outside the Supreme Court in Santiago. The Court had stripped former President Augusto Pinochet of his immunity, clearing the way for him to be tried on human rights charges.