

A.2 POLICY SUMMARY

Orientation

Effective and enduring democratization in Mexico depends on a 'scaling up' of social capital, a reinforcing of civil society. In a society struggling to emerge from authoritarian control and characterized by chronic poverty and marginalization for a huge segment of a growing population, together with rampant degradation of the natural environment, an emphasis on strengthening autonomy and strengthening equity seeking organizations of the marginalized and the poor should have priority. The relief of poverty is normally a prerequisite of environmental security, nevertheless assistance in the relief of poverty should be undertaken with a priority dimension on stopping degradation and increasing recuperation of the natural heritage.

Canadian actions vis-à-vis civil society in Mexico should be aimed at increasing the organizational and institutional capacity of civil society organizations to plan an effective role in a democratic Mexico, decreasing institutional and governmental resistance to effective and democratic participation, increasing transparency and reinforcing and extending the elements of equity in the society.

In the immediate future, Canada should encourage both symbolic and substantive actions which legitimize civil society organizations and their contribution to democratic society and which encourage their further development. Encouraging change in the attitudes and actions of the Executive branch of the Mexican government, as well as taking advantage of openings in the Legislative process, are extremely important.

Canadian aid aimed at strengthening independent Mexican civil society organizations, whether direct or through Canadian NGOs, whether bilateral or through multilateral agencies should include an initial emphasis on strengthening Canadian/Mexican partnerships and on organizational development.

Canadian contributions to democratic civil society and equity in Mexico are far too limited to have a serious impact. Canada should develop a long term and substantial assistance programme aimed at the reduction of poverty and marginalization and the strengthening of civil society and democracy in Mexico.

As part of the preparation of such a cooperation arrangement, Mexican civil society organizations should be encouraged and supported, along with Canadian counterparts, in the assessment of needs, development of priorities and elaboration of plans and programmes.