

Western Hemisphere. Our own clear interest in expanding our trade and political relations, as well as the reforms that have swept through the countries of Latin America, have made a closer partnership with our neighbours in the Americas a major Canadian foreign policy objective.

We became a full partner in the Organization of American States (OAS) in January 1990. We are now actively pursuing stronger bilateral relations with the countries of this hemisphere.

Canada wants to work even more closely with Argentina within the OAS. We share many similar positions on issues ranging from reform of the OAS itself to security and the promotion of democracy throughout the region. We look forward to continuing this co-operation in the lead-up to the next general assembly in Managua in June.

Freer trade is an integral part of these renewed relationships. Our total bilateral trade with countries on this continent reached \$6.8 billion in 1992. Canadian direct investment now exceeds \$6 billion, and is bound to increase more rapidly as investment protection agreements and taxation arrangements are worked out with individual nations.

Canada is the seventh-largest trading nation in the world. Worldwide, our merchandise exports totalled \$157 billion last year while our imports were \$148 billion, for a trade surplus in goods of \$9.4 billion.

One in three Canadian jobs depends on trade. Among the world's leading industrialized countries, only Germany surpasses Canada as a trader on a per capita basis.

During the past decade, trade liberalization has helped our country achieve an annual growth of 7 per cent in international trade -- faster than the rate at which world trade has grown, and in spite of a downturn in the world economy.

But recent years have seen major developments affecting the very basics of trade itself. They are occurring in nearly every world region.

The formation of the single market in the 12 countries of the European Community presents new challenges as well as new opportunities. This market of 360 million has replaced the United States as the largest source of direct investment in the world, and their direct investment in Canada now exceeds that of the United States.

Through various initiatives, we are actively developing our trade and investment relations in Central and Eastern Europe.