

The promotion of hemispheric security, of human rights and democracy, have been the tasks of the OAS for the last century. They will be no less important into the next century. Now, as the OAS enters its second century, new challenges have emerged which will have to be met if our hemispheric community is to survive and to prosper.

Co-operation in the OAS on environmental matters will have a direct bearing on the future of all our countries. Industrial accidents and acid rain know no borders. Loss of bio-diversity, whether in the Amazon or in Canada's Arctic, is a loss to the whole world.

Next year, one of our members -- Brazil -- will be hosting a major international conference on the environment, headed by Maurice Strong, a distinguished Canadian internationalist. We welcome this initiative and we are giving it our full support.

Co-operation in eliminating the scourge of drugs is vital to the health and stability in our region. It threatens the social fabric and stability of consumer and producer countries alike. Progress is being made. The OAS and related bodies such as the Inter-American Committee on Drug Abuse are vital to our efforts of both producer and consumer countries.

Canada's official development assistance program in the hemisphere and within the OAS responds to these pressing issues. Environmental sustainability and natural resource development are the focus of a variety of projects.

We support a number of activities that promote closer regional integration and strengthen democratization and human rights. The first initiatives we have undertaken this year within the OAS include environmental protection in the Amazon and human resource development through the technology of long-distance education.

Human resource development is especially important in our development programs. The role of women in development in particular is integral to securing a more equitable future. Over one half of this hemisphere's human resources are women. No community can face the immense challenges of the future without the full application of all its resources.

The greatest challenge, and indeed the greatest opportunity, in the new hemispheric partnership is economic reform and trade.

Mr. President, the economy of our region is in an exciting process of transformation. Unproductive policies of the past are being rejected. A commitment to freer trade and national policies which encourage investment and competitiveness are a recognition of what works.