

What did Canada hope to achieve by joining the OAS? When Canada became the thirty-third member on January 8, 1990, we did so more than forty-one years after the founding of the OAS in 1949, and eighteen years after becoming an Observer in 1972. Why did Canada not become a full member then, in 1972, or indeed, in 1949 as part of the new multilateral arrangements established after World War II? And having stepped in from the sidelines to enter the arena in early 1990, how has Canada performed?

This report on Canada's first year at the OAS will address these questions. It will do so by recounting why we joined, what we hoped to achieve, what we have achieved to date, and our goals for the future as a fully committed member of the OAS and hemisphere.

II. CANADA'S DECISION TO JOIN THE OAS

Canada's decision to join the OAS was the logical outcome of its determination to become a more active player in Latin America, pursuant to the Long Term Strategy for Latin America approved by Cabinet in October 1989. The new Strategy was aimed at enabling Canadians to contribute to and benefit from the economic and political transformations affecting the hemisphere, particularly:

1. **Economic recovery**, spurred by domestic structural adjustment programs, a general move toward market-oriented approaches, and external debt reduction through the Brady Plan and other financial initiatives. Throughout 1990, the overall economic picture has continued to improve, stimulated by continued domestic economic reforms and the prospect of increased trade, investment and debt reduction through the "Enterprise for the Americas" initiative of the U.S. Government.
2. **The spread of democratic development and respect for human rights**, as a new generation of political leaders moves away from authoritarian politics and military regimes to more open societies and representative governments. During the past year, the process of democratization has had to confront serious challenges, but has advanced and continued to consolidate. With the exception of those in Cuba and Suriname, all governments in Latin America and the Caribbean have been democratically elected.