



Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international

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NOTES FOR AN ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE SERGIO MARCHI MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE TO THE 22ND ANNUAL MIAMI CONFERENCE ON THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA "BUSINESS IN THE HEMISPHERE — FROM TALK TO ACTION"

MIAMI, Florida
December 9, 1998 (10:00 a.m. EST)

I am delighted to be with you today.

As a Canadian who is always being kidded about my country's weather by my American friends, it is good to be here to enjoy the warmth of both the weather and your welcome.

It is certainly appropriate that we should meet in Miami — a city known as a gateway to the Americas. Over the years, it has become a meeting place for diverse cultures and languages: a city with its eyes clearly on the vast and vibrant markets of Central and South America, as well as on the Caribbean.

Canada, though separated by distance from many of you, sees itself as a nation of the Americas. And this will be made very clear during the next two years when we will become, quite literally, host to the hemisphere.

Starting next summer, we will welcome athletes from throughout the hemisphere to the Pan American games in Winnipeg. In September, the Conference of Spouses of Leaders of the FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas] will be held in Ottawa and then — in my hometown, Toronto — the meeting of FTAA Ministers and the Americas Business Forum. In the year 2000, Canada will host the OAS [Organization of American States] General Assembly, and later, Canada will receive the leaders of the hemisphere for the Third Summit of the Americas.

Our commitment to the Americas has also been displayed in other ways. When Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and Nicaragua, Canada, together with many other nations, moved swiftly to assist. In addition to the immediate deployment of a 180-person military relief mission to Honduras, Canada was proud to pledge \$110 million in disaster relief and reconstruction assistance. Above all, our hearts and our prayers go out to all of you who were tragically affected by this terrible disaster.

As you can see, we take our hemisphere seriously. We also take our commercial relations seriously. In the past five years, two-way trade between Canada and the Americas has doubled — and our investment in the region has tripled!

This morning, I would like to concentrate on an initiative that holds tremendous potential for the future — the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

As you know, Canada is chairing the FTAA negotiations until October of next year, and this will culminate with a meeting of Trade Ministers in Toronto on November 1 and 2, immediately following the Americas Business Forum on October 30 and 31.