

This kind of reform can only strengthen the OAS. One of the factors that tipped the scales in Canada's decision to join three and a half years ago was the sense that the OAS, mirroring the hemisphere, was changing. It was becoming more open to reform, determined to become a more relevant organization, more responsive to the needs of its democratic members. We have tried to contribute to this process during our brief tenure in this organization, and we have already seen some very tangible and encouraging results.

We must ensure that the OAS responds to the changing needs of member nations, which, after all, have themselves changed and developed. At the same time, we must recognize that these are times of restraint for all of us, and that the OAS must be fiscally responsible. We must ensure that we are getting value for money. This often means making difficult choices, sorting out our priorities, even eliminating some long-standing but perhaps less useful activities. Unfortunately, there is no other way. Resources are scarce. We must use them well.

One of the ways in which we can maximize resources and, at the same time, enhance our effectiveness is through co-operation with other agencies. The Secretary-General has been examining ways of increasing co-operation and co-ordination with the United Nations, for example. We should continue to encourage this type of activity and view it not as detracting from our own autonomy or importance but, rather, as a means of sharing expertise and resources. Again, in the case of Haiti, it has been shown that such collaboration can be fruitful and help to advance our own interests.

Canada waited a long time to join the OAS. Some may have mistaken our caution for complacency, and may have expected us to start off as rather quiet students of the organization. I think it is fair to say that we have shown ourselves to be neither quiet nor complacent, but, rather, innovative and active partners in this association.

If I can make a small personal observation, Mrs. McDougall would strongly endorse the comment made by President Chamorro, when she opened this General Assembly this morning, that the OAS must be "capable of taking on tasks never before attempted, with new and daring actions, leaving behind the timidity that has so often affected our organization."

Canada will continue to play a strong and active part in the years ahead. We believe that, as the prime forum for political, economic and social progress in the hemisphere, this organization has still more exciting potential waiting to be tapped.