

UPD requires the co-operation, active interest and participation of member states. Democracy is a vital living concept for all OAS members and requires constant nurturing to be a successful system of governance.

The Organization has taken a number of other measures over the past few years to strengthen, defend and promote democracy in the hemisphere. Resolution 1080 of 1991 allows for special actions by the OAS in response to interruptions of democratic process. This year, member states have devised a system for the implementation and financing of such activities. In 1992, the Protocol of Washington was passed, allowing for the suspension of member states where a democratically elected government has been overthrown by force. Canada urges countries that have not yet done so to ratify this important instrument.

Canada continues to believe that it would be useful and appropriate for the OAS to develop a capability for the early identification, prevention and management of situations of potential conflict. The use of such a capability would, of course, imply the consent of the member state or states involved. Nevertheless, it appears obvious that the OAS needs to develop tools for early action in cases of both internal upheavals, such as that which occurred in Haiti, and conflicts between nations, such as the recent incident between our friends Peru and Ecuador, in order to prevent a damaging escalation of tensions.

Finally, democracy means participation by all sectors of society, including non-governmental actors. Countries of the region and indeed the OAS itself must find ways to be more open and receptive to the views of these potential partners. Canada is currently chairing an OAS working group on this matter and hopes that the group will be able to make recommendations to the Permanent Council in the coming year to facilitate interaction between the OAS and NGOs [non-governmental organizations].

Before moving on, I would like to say a brief word about the 35th member of our Organization - Cuba. Canada's policy toward Cuba has been one of constructive engagement - we believe that political and economic advances can be encouraged by maintaining a dialogue with the Cuban people and government. And while Canada recognizes that there is still much progress to be made in Cuba, in particular in the areas of human rights and democratic development, we believe that the OAS should begin to examine ways of opening up a similar dialogue with Cuba, looking toward the day when conditions will be appropriate for its reintegration into the inter-American system.

Peace and security is a central component of Canadian foreign policy and of Canadian activity here at the OAS. Indeed, it is also a fundamental purpose of the OAS under the Charter. It is for this reason that Canada wholeheartedly supports the