



negotiating process; to render public FTAA negotiating texts; to encourage the activities of non-governmental organizations within their respective countries; and to help initiate a dialogue between business and non-governmental organizations on free trade issues.”

The Government has already taken action that is in full accordance with these recommendations. Canada's leadership role as first chair of the FTAA negotiations was a key opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to strengthening ties within the hemisphere and to advocate a meaningful role for civil society in the FTAA. Recognizing the importance of facilitating the constructive participation of different sectors of society in relation to the FTAA, Canada was a key player in the establishment of the Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society (the Committee).

Since then, the Government has pursued its efforts to engage our hemispheric partners in working more closely with civil society. In February 2001, Canada tabled a proposal suggesting concrete ways for trade ministers and the Committee to do more to actively contribute to increased transparency and a more inclusive negotiation process. The proposal is available at www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/civilsociety-e.asp.

In line with Canada's proposal, at the FTAA Ministerial Meeting held in Buenos Aires in April 2001, ministers renewed and strengthened the Committee's mandate. Since then, the Committee extended a permanent open invitation to civil societies of the hemisphere for written submissions that it shares in a timely manner with the relevant FTAA negotiators and committees. Executive summaries of the submissions received from previous invitations and reports to ministers are publicly available. The Committee also provides impetus to initiatives such as the improvement of the official FTAA Web site (www.ftaa-alca.org); the organization of national and regional seminars (Canada was an active participant in the first regional seminar, held on July 18, 2002, in Mérida, Mexico); the holding of public forums for business and civil society on the margins of FTAA ministerial meetings; and the issuance of press releases by FTAA entities after each meeting, including the agenda and the list of participating countries.

Canada has also played a leadership role in the promotion of transparency; it was at Canada's initiative that, at the 2001 Buenos Aires meeting, agreement was reached to release the draft FTAA negotiation text. At the next Ministerial Meeting in Quito in November 2002, Canada will again seek a renewed consensus to release an updated draft of the FTAA negotiating text.

The Government recognizes that greater openness and transparency are essential to an informed debate on the FTAA and are also paramount to mobilize the support of businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens on free trade issues. The Government continuously posts relevant, comprehensive and timely information on the

