

rights observance. We must ensure that we create the conditions necessary for it to take root and flourish throughout the hemisphere.

Elections are critical but only the first step on the path of democratic development. All democratic nations, including Canada, are continually pressed to implement new legislation, policy and regulations to enhance freedom, equality and peace within their borders.

The OAS has taken a number of very positive steps in this regard over the past few years. Indeed, it has proven itself a veritable guardian of hemispheric democracy. The political commitments to democracy given by the membership at recent General Assemblies, culminating last year with the Protocol of Washington and the Declaration of Managua, are evidence that the countries of this hemisphere cherish democracy and all that it represents. Canada was the first country to ratify the Protocol of Washington in October 1993, and we would urge all our fellow members to join us in this concrete expression of the OAS's dedication to upholding and preserving democratic rule.

Canada remains convinced that the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, created in 1990, has a crucial role to play in helping governments of the hemisphere to lay the appropriate foundations for long-term democratic development. Its current work plan, with its focus on practical training for legislators and senior officials, grassroots education campaigns, and so forth, is extremely promising. The OAS can do more to assist national governments in strengthening democratic institutions including the parliaments and judiciaries.

The continuing impasse on Haiti is a potent reminder of the importance of these sorts of efforts. I think we would all agree, in retrospect, that had Haiti's fledgling democratic institutions been provided with more support following the election of President Aristide, we might not still be in the difficult situation we are in today. As one of the Friends of the Secretary-General, we have taken a leading role for some time in promoting sanctions, dialogue and our own nation's participation in UN-sponsored presence in Haiti, in order to restore democracy in that country. As members of the United Nations, we pressed for the recent Security Council resolution imposing a strengthening of sanctions against the de facto regime. Canada believes that firm signals of our collective commitment to democracy and our determination to see President Aristide restored are the best means, at present, to convince the illegitimate regime to relinquish power.

I would like to say a word about another country in our hemisphere whose people do not enjoy the benefits of democracy — that country is Cuba, whose membership in our organization has