

Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL)

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Organization's mandate/goals:

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is an independent, non-governmental organization dedicated to deepening and strengthening Canada's relations with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through policy discussion and analysis. FOCAL's mission is to develop a greater understanding of important hemispheric issues and to help build a stronger community of the Americas.

Issues relating to inter-American relations, governance and human security, social policies, and economic integration represent FOCAL's core policy concerns. FOCAL monitors developments in the Americas and, working with experts, analyses emerging issues. Many of these issues are discussed at conferences and workshops organized by FOCAL. The discussions lead to the development of policy options and research papers that FOCAL brings to the attention of governments, international organizations, the private sector, the non-governmental community and the media. Information is shared with the public through publications, including briefings and research papers, conference reports, and newsletters. FOCAL's web site provides links to other sources of information on the Internet. FOCAL also serves as a port of call for requests for information on hemispheric issues. Meetings and networking with the research community and alliances with key partner organizations further FOCAL's communication efforts.

Areas of expertise relevant to 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms:

Security -- Promoting good governance

New issues have emerged which represent a threat to democracy and development, such as the rise of criminality, corruption and the continued problems related to the region's drug trade. They require more analysis and the development of options for local governance and sub-regional integration. Second generation democratic and human rights reforms are also needed, such as judicial reform, mechanisms to strengthen the work and the accountability of civil society organizations, and more attention to the root causes of individual insecurity in the region. FOCAL's policy analysis has concentrated on identifying the links between the various threats to governance and democracy in the Americas and contributing to developing a credible and relevant hemispheric human security agenda.

Consultation, Co-operation and Information Exchange -- Information sharing among relevant institutions, including the establishment of relevant coordination agencies

The Political Database of the Americas is a joint internet-based project of the Center for Latin American Studies at Georgetown University and the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy of the Organization of American States. The Database project grew out of the 1994 Summit of the Americas, where regional leaders called for the exchange of experiences among democratic institutions, and emphasized the need for timely, authoritative, hemispheric political data. Through the acquisition, preservation and dissemination of comparative data, the Database provides electronic information resources to students, academics, policy analysts and government officials on politics in the Americas. The Database web site provides full-text copies of major national legal instruments, along with a range of academic resources and statistical data, for the thirty-five countries of the hemisphere.