

Because peace and security are vital for the well-being of people and of democratic institutions, the promotion of confidence and security-building measures in the Americas is one of Canada's key regional priorities. Canadian efforts in this regard include promoting regional dialogue with a view to strengthening the inter-American system, de-mining, promoting transparency in defence matters, increasing co-operation with UN peacekeeping efforts, strengthening multilateral disaster preparedness and response capacity, and addressing the special concerns of small island states.

Chapter II also highlights the Government of Canada's efforts to support and provide fair labour policies, laws, programs and assistance, including providing temporary income replacement for insured workers who become involuntarily unemployed; developing, administering and enforcing legislation and regulations related to wages, the workplace and working conditions; respecting and incorporating socially disadvantaged groups such as women, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities; and providing accurate and timely labour market and career information.

Economic Integration and Free Trade

Chapter III describes Canada's commitment to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as a principal means of stimulating economic growth and development in the Hemisphere through liberalized trade and investment. The chapter provides a general overview of Canadian efforts to support the Santiago Plan of Action mandates and looks at progress toward reaching an FTAA agreement.

Canada recognizes the special needs and circumstances affecting the integration of smaller economies into a Free Trade Area of the Americas and has been a strong supporter of the measures taken to support smaller states in the negotiations. Canada is an active participant in meetings of the FTAA Consultative Group on Smaller Economies, where issues such as technical assistance needs and the concept of special and differential treatment are raised. Canada has directed substantial resources to the region's vulnerable countries with a view to building their capacity to integrate themselves into the world trading system and participate fully in the FTAA process, thereby positioning these countries to reap the full benefits of a final agreement.

Canada believes that well-functioning financial markets are key to promoting growth and development and to reducing countries' vulnerability to crises. Consequently, it is working to strengthen, modernize and integrate financial markets across the Hemisphere and to implement universal standards and codes, especially in the area of financial supervision and regulation.

Chapter III describes how Canada is also working with its hemispheric partners on a number of other fronts — including science and technology, energy co-operation, climate change, telecommunications and transportation — all of which are related to and have an impact on the overall development and economic integration of the region.