

Economic Integration: Stable Partners

QUESTION

Drug running and guerilla movements are rampant all over South America. Shouldn't we hold off on closer economic relations with South Americans until their societies become more stable?

SUGGESTED REPLY

- Canada has always adopted a policy of engagement with trading partners, believing that when societies are opened to international cooperation, social and political reforms will follow.
- Remarkable transformations have taken place in the region -- 34 of 35 countries now have democratically elected governments. Large-scale human rights violations are in decline.
- A Canada-inspired initiative led to the creation of a Unit for the Promotion of Democracy in the OAS. The Unit helps the OAS to promote and strengthen democratic institutions and processes. It monitors elections and sets up programs for countries coming out of conflict situations.
- Preserving and promoting democracy was one of the four main planks of the Plan of Action adopted by Heads of State and Government of the Americas at the 1994 Miami Summit, and will be a key agenda item at the 1998 Summit in Santiago.

Responsive:

- However, democracy in many countries in the Hemisphere remains fragile.
- Human rights abuses involving disadvantaged groups are still a distressing problem in the region.