

exciting. It is a time to celebrate. It is an extraordinary moment. But it is essential that this Organization and its members seize this unique opportunity to consolidate democracy throughout the region.

Last year Canada proposed the creation in the OAS of a unit for democratic development within the General Secretariat. We were very pleased that this proposal was given unanimous support. We believe this represented a reaffirmation by OAS members of the fundamental values of the Organization.

During the past year, the Secretariat has performed an invaluable service to democracy by monitoring elections. It contributed effectively to the electoral processes in Nicaragua, Haiti, El Salvador, Surinam and Paraguay. But the mechanics of holding elections are only a part of a healthy democracy.

The Charter says that one of the aims of the OAS is to promote and consolidate representative democracy. We believe that the OAS, through the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, can play a role in strengthening the range of institutions essential to democratic societies.

I wish to reaffirm our offer to assist in the full establishment of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy as soon as possible.

The resurgence of democracy and a growing respect for human rights in the hemisphere have strengthened the foundations of the OAS.

Canada applauds and supports the good work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

A concrete demonstration of our commitment to the inter-American human rights system is the candidacy for the court of Madam Justice Bertha Wilson, one of Canada's foremost jurists and until recently a judge on our Supreme Court.

Fundamental also to the future of the hemispheric community is the quest for peace and security. Indeed, the OAS Charter underscores this task. Security, in its broadest sense, has ceased to be something to be achieved unilaterally.

Security is multidimensional; it addresses themes such as arms control, the promotion of democracy, the furtherance of economic and social development, the protection of the environment, and the safeguarding of human rights. To be effective, it must be built in a co-operative framework, by us all.