

In the same way as we all support and agree on the merits of democracy, we must unite to strengthen the inter-American system of human rights, as recommended in the *Plan of Action* we are considering for approval. To do so, we must adopt proposals to bolster the system and adjust it to the new realities at the General Assembly of the Organization of American States to be held in San José, so that it will become the cornerstone of the new order we are creating.

Among the main proposals, Costa Rica urges the member states that have still not ratified the Convention, its protocols and related instruments, to do so and to accept the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in cases of dispute. This would mean that the system would no longer offer different avenues for conflict resolution depending on the country, which should not and must not continue to exist.

A second step is to gradually turn the Court and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights into permanent bodies and change the relations between them. Those relations should be fluid, constant and flexible, without unnecessary duplication of processes, so that the Court will not have to repeat procedures already carried out by the Commission.

We also propose to introduce a model under the OAS for tracking the sentences handed down by the system, which should act as a linkage between the OAS's human rights mechanisms and its political bodies. It is also important to give individuals direct access to the system, whose natural evolution should provide plaintiffs and victims with the possibility of protecting their rights autonomously.

The order we wish to build requires a counterpart. It is economic integration that will translate into more and better opportunities for poor families and developing countries. This venue has contributed greatly to negotiating the Free Trade Area of the Americas, a market of 800 million people, a dream that is coming closer to reality.

Costa Rica, as a country that advocates free trade by example, firmly supports the prompt entry into force of the FTAA. Seventy three percent of our exports, 79 percent of our imports and 94 percent of direct foreign investment in our country come from economic relations with countries in this hemisphere.

This is why we participate in the FTAA process with conviction, certain that the best option is openness, particularly for a small market that provides few opportunities to grow at a pace that is consistent with our aspirations for human development. We have worked hard, with capacity, demonstrating leadership that is unrelated to the size of our economy, to reach free trade agreements with strong and dynamic economies on this continent, which not only prepare us for the FTAA but contribute to the consolidation of hemispheric integration.

It is an honour for Costa Ricans to be signing a free trade agreement next Monday with Canada, the country ranked first in the world in human development. It is a bilateral agreement between a developing country and a member of the G-7. The treaty is a giant step forward for Costa Rica and is also an important contribution to the process of hemispheric integration. In separate documents, both Canada and Costa