

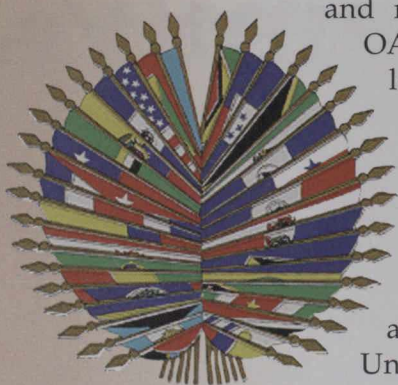


Photo: CANAPRES

Removing landmines is assisting in the

Canada and the Americas

The OAS is the oldest inter-American organization, founded in 1890 by 21 American Republics. In 1948, the American Union was created, and in 1961, 21 countries joined. Canada became a member in 1989, and it joined as a full member on January 8, 1990.



Since then Canada has become an active and respected leader within the OAS in several areas, including landmine removal, institutional renewal, the promotion of human rights and combating the trade in illicit drugs. Canada has been influential in generating reforms in the Organization. One notable advance was the creation of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, which has overseen elections and managed hemispheric demining programs; currently heading the Unit is Canadian Elizabeth Spehar. Other innovations included promotion of dialogue among hemispheric parliamentarians, development of guidelines for the participation of civil society and adoption of greater fiscal responsibility. Canada continues to promote wider institutional renewal as it strives to make the OAS more relevant, more dynamic and better able to respond to the changing realities of the region.

The premier political forum for hemispheric policy discussions and decision making, the OAS plays a key part in implementing many Summit of the Americas commitments. It is also a leading regional force for strengthening democracy and encouraging sustainable development. Particularly important for Canada, the OAS is assisting in the regional eradication of anti-personnel mines.

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Hull, Québec

K1A 0S7

of State and Government of the Americas, held in Ottawa from September 29 to October 1. Canada's successful organization of the Conference helped advance our priorities on numerous issues, including child development, health and education.

As Chair of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations for the first 18 months of the process, Canada hosted the FTAA Trade Ministers' Meeting in Toronto on November 3 and 4. Immediately preceding it, from November 1 to 3, was the Fifth Americas Business Forum, organized by Canadian business associations with assistance from the federal government. At the Forum, the Americas' business community generated concrete, practical proposals for facilitating hemispheric commerce. Participants also had the opportunity to talk with Trade Ministers and hence to contribute to the FTAA process. At the same time, Americas' corporate leaders took advantage of the Forum to promote their companies and develop strategic international business contacts.

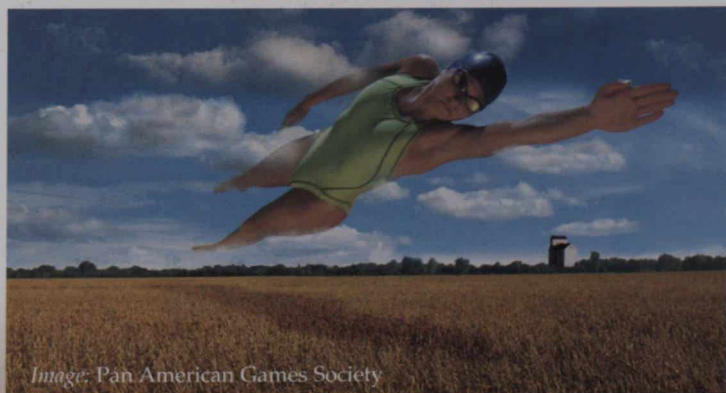


Image: Pan American Games Society