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6. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)

Liss Jeffrey and Gisela McKay from the McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology stressed the role new ICTs can play in imparting information and connecting communities. According to Jeffrey, through ICTs, our values as Canadians can be spread instantaneously across the Hemisphere. In this context, Canada could capitalise on its "geo-political" position as the "Scandinavia" of the Americas to promote "culture" of Human Security, distinct from that of the United States.

ICTs could also help nurture engaged and well informed publics, strengthening democratic governance at home and abroad. Therefore, ICTs should be central to the Hemispheric agenda. Initiatives should be developed aimed at narrowing the "digital" divide between poor and rich countries and creating a public "digital" space for policy discussion and deliberation.

Arch Ritter, Canadian Association for Latin America and Caribbean Studies, Carleton University, argued that the provision of clean water and basic human necessities should take precedence to closing the digital divide. Jeffrey responded by saying that leaving the poor regions out of the "global village" would marginalise them even more in the longer run. Steps should be taken to facilitate public access to ICTs even in the poorest countries, together with helping to meet basic human needs.

7. Aid and Relief Initiatives: The Role of CIDA

Arch Ritter commented on the enormous work that CIDA has done in the Hemisphere and the necessity of maintaining CIDA's programmes especially in the poorest countries. Michael Jay from CIDA said that despite a modest Hemispheric portfolio, CIDA's impact in the region has been significant. He also pointed out that equity is fundamental to CIDA's objectives. It is the basis on which funding and programming choices are made. Moreover, civil society is actively involved in developing CIDA's programmes. In this "modest and quiet" way, CIDA serves as a vehicle to promote equity in the Hemisphere and engage Canadian NGOs in development.

8. Initiatives aimed at the Summit Process

John Graham, FOCAL, drew attention to the Summit process arguing, that it is necessary to create a practical and manageable agenda for the Summit in Quebec City. The agenda should be topical, credible, and financially manageable. It should be attached to the OAS and facilitate transfer of skills. Efforts should be made not to clutter the agenda with myriad of diverse and conflicting issues. Meanwhile, the framework of Human Security should be adopted. Graham also pointed out that some critics would argue that the entire OAS mechanism is obsolete and