

Leaders were motivated by a shared desire to establish a sound basis for sustainable growth and create new economic opportunities for all citizens of the Americas.

The FTAA remains a key element in the collective effort to promote economic growth and expand prosperity in the Americas. Canada views the FTAA negotiations as part of an overall plan to promote greater economic and social integration. Economic prosperity and social progress are common goals throughout the hemisphere. Economic integration is essential to achieving the Summit's broader objectives of consolidating democracy, protecting human rights and security, pursuing sustainable development and realizing human potential.

The challenge for the Summit is not only to give impetus to negotiations for a good trade deal, but also to produce a blueprint for action that will make a positive difference in the quality of life for the people of the region. Greater economic opportunities will help improve the standard of living for all citizens of the Americas.

Realizing Human Potential

The commitment to increasing prosperity and strengthening democracy must go hand in hand with actions to protect human rights and encourage greater participation by all citizens in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their societies and the region. Initiatives are needed to support the acquisition of needed skills and the expansion of opportunities, promote better health, allow a more equitable sharing of benefits, and expand opportunities to contribute to society. Such initiatives must promote respect for cultural diversity and recognize the unique value of the ethnic, racial, linguistic and religious strands woven into the fabric of the hemispheric community.

The common aim is to empower groups including youth, women, indigenous peoples, the poor and the disabled — who have too often been forced to the margins of the mainstream — and to help every individual obtain a full and equal opportunity to live with dignity, realize their full potential, and contribute to the development of the societies in which they live and work.

Creating new and greater opportunities for people means giving them the tools to develop and compete. Leaders recognized this at the 1998 Summit in Santiago when they called education “the key to progress.” The Summit in Quebec City will look at ways to expand opportunities for participating in and benefiting from the global, knowledge-based economy. It will encourage co-operation among members to increase access to education and skills development and promote life-long learning. These initiatives, and all initiatives under this larger theme, are especially important to children and youth — the living future of the Americas.