

Mr. Chairman:

We in Canada were extremely distressed over the efforts of President [Elias] Serrano to stage an "auto-coup" in Guatemala. This backward step, coming so quickly after the coups in Haiti and Peru, would have led to widespread disappointment in Canada, as a further setback to the progress towards democracy in our hemisphere. Canadians, and hence Canadian governments, have no interest in strengthening our ties with dictatorships.

Therefore, I am pleased to join with others today in expressing my satisfaction that Mr. Serrano's attempt to rule by himself seems to have failed. It failed thanks to the courageous stand taken by all sectors of Guatemalan society and by individual Guatemalans. It failed thanks to the strong reaction of the international community led by the OAS [Organization of American States] and most of its member states.

Before going further, allow me to commend you, Mr. Secretary-General, and our colleagues from Nicaragua, Barbados and Uruguay, for your decisive, highly skilled intervention on behalf of the hemispheric community and the cause of democratic principles.

I agree with those who have already cautioned that the restoration of full representative democracy under the Constitution in Guatemala has not yet been completed. The OAS, therefore, must keep this ad hoc meeting open until this task has been fully completed.

If events dictate, we must be prepared to persevere both through this organization and bilaterally to ensure that representative democracy is restored. We must be prepared to tighten individual and collective sanctions if there is any backsliding. We must ensure that the OAS sends a clear and unambiguous message to the hemisphere and to the world: attempts to overturn democratically elected institutions by extra-constitutional means will not be tolerated.

Mr. Chairman, like a number of other countries in this hemisphere and therefore a number of members of this organization, Guatemala is a relatively new democracy. Its democratic organizations are still new and, in some cases, weak. These institutions are also threatened by the continuation of a long-standing insurgency that saps the energies of the government, its institutions and the entire society.

While we support efforts such as those just undertaken by this organization to turn back the clock on would-be dictators, we are firmly convinced that a more productive, long-term approach by the OAS and its member states is called for.

What we have in mind is a much more active role for the OAS in the promotion and strengthening of democracy. The Unit for the