

The question of how international obligations in the fields of human rights, labour standards, the environment and the protection of cultural diversity might best be enforced is complex and challenging for all governments. The issue has already been the subject of much debate and continues to attract considerable attention in the context of the Summit of the Americas process and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations. No clear consensus has yet emerged on how this might best be achieved, in particular whether the best means is through international trade agreements.

The Government believes that it is important to accompany words with meaningful actions in ensuring a balanced and coherent political, economic and social agenda in the Americas. This is why Canada has been at the forefront of addressing social issues as equal priorities to support economic integration and trade liberalization. The Government of Canada's conviction and expertise with regard to this approach is reflected in the environment and labour side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement and the Canada-Costa Rica Free Trade Agreement. Canada's commitment to a balanced approach is also reflected in Canada's pursuit of a New International Instrument on Cultural Diversity that would recognize the special role of cultural goods and services and the right of governments to preserve and promote cultural diversity.

The goal of achieving an FTAA by 2005 is an important element in the pursuit of overall Summit objectives. Economic integration through the FTAA is seen as a tool to create more prosperity in the region and, in doing so, strengthen democracy, promote human rights and address social and economic issues through hemispheric growth and cooperation. There have been calls by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for trade disciplines to be included in the FTAA to ensure compliance with other international obligations, such as labour and environmental standards. Studying possible enforcement alternatives, as requested by the Committee, will serve to highlight the issues and provide for a meaningful participation by interested groups and individuals in the process.

AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

(RECOMMENDATION 2)

“GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE TO THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM OF THE *AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS*, THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INVESTIGATE MECHANISMS, SUCH AS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING OR A RESERVATION, TO ALLOW IT TO RATIFY THE CONVENTION IN THE NEAR FUTURE.”

