

Canada AND THE OAS

Dept. of External Affairs
Min. des Affaires extérieures
OTTAWA

A VIGOROUS PARTNERSHIP

On January 8, 1990, Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS) as its 33rd member,

a step up from the Permanent Observer status we had had from 1972. Over the years, we have shown leadership in several areas, including mine action, poverty eradication, the protection of human rights and combatting illicit drugs. On the last topic, in 1999 we initiated a dialogue among foreign ministers to consider the human security implications of the problem.

One of Canada's first initiatives in 1990 was to propose creation of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. The proposal was accepted and the Unit now provides support for the strengthening and consolidation of democratic processes and institutions in member states. Its first full-time Executive Co-ordinator was a Canadian, John Graham, as is his successor, Elizabeth Spehar.

After becoming a member, Canada quickly assumed an active role in promoting new thinking on hemispheric security within the Organization. By 1995, the OAS had transformed its three-year-old Special Committee on Hemispheric Security into a Permanent Committee, intensifying its work on issues of nuclear non-proliferation, conventional arms transfers, landmines, confidence- and security-building measures, and conflict prevention.

A strong advocate of civil society participation in the policy development process, Canada has supported increased involvement of non-governmental organizations, women and youth, as well as representatives of the Hemisphere's Indigenous peoples and parliamentarians in hemispheric and OAS affairs. This June in Windsor, civil society is expected to participate on a scale larger than ever before at the annual OAS General Assembly.

Canada is the second-biggest contributor to the OAS, providing approximately 12.4 percent of its Regular Fund (\$13.6 million this year). Through the Canadian International Development Agency, Canada also contributes \$2 million annually to the Voluntary Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, which supports the social, economic and cultural development activities of the Organization. In addition, we contribute \$600 000 per year to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

Canada has promoted fiscal responsibility and renewal within the OAS and its specialized agencies. The aim is to make the inter-American system more relevant, more dynamic and better able to respond collectively to the changing realities of the region.



As host of this year's General Assembly and the third Summit of the Americas in Québec City in April 2001, Canada now has an extraordinary opportunity: to shape the hemispheric agenda and continue the vital work of helping to build a better future for all citizens of the Americas. ●—



Web sites

www.AmericasCanada.org
Hemisphere Summit Office,
Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca
Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/oas
Permanent Mission of
Canada to the OAS

www.oas.org
Organization of American States

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien at the second Summit of the Americas, Santiago, Chile, April 1998



photo: Jean-Marc Carisse