

Society

Weaving together the extended family of the Americas

clear to HSA that Canada has no problem with demonstrations so long as they remain peaceful. In discussions between the department and HSA, both sides agreed that they have a responsibility to consider the security and well-being of all the people involved: Québec City residents, summit leaders and protesters themselves.

The Alliance is only one of many hemispheric civil society groupings gearing up to play their part, either from afar or on the spot. For example, with DFAIT support two Canadian NGOs are staging a symposium in Québec: the International Institute for Sustainable Development (a non-profit group with headquarters in Winnipeg) and the Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature (with the involvement of Pierre-Marc Johnson, a former Quebec premier and prominent environmentalist). At the symposium, representatives of government, international organizations and NGOs from all over the Hemisphere will discuss issues related to sustainable development in the Americas.

Information exchanges

In addition to meetings of the Special Committee on Inter-American Summit Management, DFAIT has held regular information exchanges with Canadian groups. These sessions update all participants on the evolving Plan of Action, the contributions of civil society groups to it, and Canada's priorities at the Summit.

The collaboration extends beyond Summit preparations to follow-up and implementation of the Plan of Action. Over the long run, the goals include keeping issues such as human rights and the environment on the radar screen of governments, and building a community of the Americas linked at every level of society.

For Canada this linkage is crucial. As Prime Minister Chrétien said at last year's OAS General Assembly, "For democracy to take deeper root, all citizens must be heard." ●—

photo: DFAIT

NGO consultations at OAS General Assembly in Windsor, Ontario, June 2000

