

Madam Chairman, Excellencies, Foreign Ministers of the hemisphere, Mr. Secretary General, Mr. Assistant Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen, friends:

It is a great pleasure for me to attend my second annual General Assembly of the Organization of American States [OAS]. These OAS meetings are very special in that they provide foreign ministers from throughout the hemisphere with a unique opportunity to sit around the same table and engage in an open dialogue of equals on a wide range of issues. The very fruitful discussions we have had over the past two days are proof of the value of this sort of encounter and of all that we can accomplish through our hemispheric organization.

I must also extend our sincere congratulations to the Government of Haiti for their hosting of this event. When President Aristide offered last year in Belém to host the next annual meeting of the OAS, we all accepted in the fervent hope and expectation that, by then, his legitimately elected government would be back in power. That indeed has come to pass - democracy has been restored to the Haitian people and the rebuilding of the country is well under way. This is cause for true celebration. There could, therefore, be no more fitting place for this year's meeting than Haiti, "la perle des Antilles."

Madam Chairman, Canada has now completed five full years in the Organization of American States. We have found it to be a very productive and fulfilling experience, and we look forward to continued active involvement in the years ahead. Our future participation in the OAS will be shaped and influenced by three key events of the past 12 months: the issuance of the Canadian government's Foreign Policy Statement *Canada in the World*; the meeting of hemispheric leaders at the Summit of the Americas in December 1994; and the recent release of Secretary General Gaviria's *New Vision of the OAS*.

#### **Canadian Foreign Policy Statement**

Canada's Foreign Policy Statement found its origins in a commitment by the Canadian government to encourage more active public involvement in foreign-policy making. This commitment resulted in the creation of a multi-party Parliamentary Committee to seek the views of ordinary Canadians. After holding over 70 meetings, receiving over 550 submissions, hearing from 500 witnesses, and commissioning several studies, the Committee tabled its report. The Government then used this report to develop a comprehensive statement called *Canada in the World*, which will serve as a blueprint for our foreign policy as we move into the 21st century. The Canadian government considers this process to have been an extremely valuable and productive exercise in participatory democracy.

*Canada in the World* is important for our involvement in the OAS because it highlights the importance of Canada's relationship