

# Statement

Secretary of  
State for  
External Affairs



# Déclaration

Secrétaire d'État  
aux Affaires  
extérieures

**92/19**

**AS DELIVERED**

**AN ADDRESS BY**  
**THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,**  
**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,**  
**TO THE 22ND ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**OF THE**  
**ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

**NASSAU, Bahamas**  
**May 19, 1992**

Affaires extérieures et  
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and  
International Trade Canada

Canada

Mr. President of the Assembly, Mr. Secretary General,  
Mr. Assistant Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen and  
Friends:

It is a great pleasure to be in Nassau to lead the Canadian delegation to the 22nd General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS). It brings back special memories of Santiago last year when I first attended a General Assembly of this organization.

On behalf of the Canadian delegation, I would like to convey sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. The agenda is full, and our deliberations require difficult decisions. But I can assure you of the full support of the Canadian delegation as you carry out your important responsibilities.

I also wish to thank the Government of the Bahamas for their exceptional hospitality and conference arrangements. The natural beauty and serenity of Nassau have given us welcome peace of mind to deal with the many issues before us.

Canada is proud to be a member of the oldest regional organization in the world. We joined the OAS with the intention of becoming a full and active partner in the Americas, and I am pleased that in only our second year of membership, we have moved forward along this path.

We have worked hard to support the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which has made important progress in the face of resistance from many quarters. Human rights must be unconditional, and we can never compromise our defence of them.

The Commission itself must remain active at its highest level -- that is, the level of Commissioners whom we ourselves elect. It must be independent and specific. And it must be objective, pointing out progress where it is appropriate, as well as condemning as necessary.

Mr. President, I urge all members to support the work of the Commission, to ensure that it is a strong, credible voice in defence of human rights. If we do not, we will abandon the field to organizations outside the inter-American system. Our organization must give clear indication of its own resolve in this most important area.

Canada also applauds the work of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and welcomes the increasing co-operation between it and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The rights of women are central to our progress on overall human rights, and I am pleased that Canada signed the three inter-American conventions on the rights of women at an event last fall

marking the first anniversary of Canada's membership on the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM).

Canada's candidacy for membership on the Executive Committee of the Commission, if successful, would enable us to contribute directly to important issues affecting women and all peoples of the Americas.

Peace and security in the hemisphere are fundamental to progress in other areas. As a result of the resolution on security and non-proliferation adopted last year, much progress has been made in redefining and updating this concept.

The scope of security has been broadened beyond traditional military concerns to include economic development, human rights, the fight against the illicit trade in drugs and environmental protection. Canada wants to see this work continue.

The issue of the environment and, in that context, high seas fisheries, is a matter of special concern for Canada, and indeed for the whole hemisphere. For a number of years, Canada has had to contend with overfishing of important fish stocks by foreign vessels just outside our 200-mile limit. This overfishing has contributed to the current crisis in our East Coast fishery.

Overexploitation of straddling stocks in contravention to sound conservation and management practices is a problem that touches many coastal states here today -- from Alaska and Newfoundland to Tierra del Fuego. At the Rio Summit next month, we are asking the world community to recognize principles and measures to conserve these stocks and to agree to an urgent international conference to resolve this problem in a manner consistent with the Law of the Sea Convention.

This is an initiative we originally commenced with Chile and Argentina. A number of other South American, as well as Caribbean and Central American states have now joined with us and countries from all parts of the world in supporting it. We must continue to work together to ensure success at Rio and beyond.

Every one of these issues is important, and I again commend the members of the OAS for the work that has been accomplished over the past year. But, for all the progress that has been made, we have suffered a number of distressing setbacks that have cast a shadow on the fundamental "raison d'être" of our organization.

One year ago, in Santiago, we paid tribute to a remarkable development that marked a turning point in the history of the OAS: we were 34 member governments attending the 21st General Assembly and all 34 -- without exception -- were democratically elected.

While that landmark event was not, in itself, an agenda item, it did not pass unnoticed. As members of the OAS, we share common values of peace, justice and representative democracy enshrined in the Charter of Bogota.

Today we meet again, shaken by events that threaten a return to darker times, but determined to uphold democratic values in our hemisphere. We must focus on democracy at this meeting because it cannot be taken for granted and because it is essential for the future of the Americas. We have a clear mandate to defend democracy as provided by our charter and reaffirmed by the Commitment of Santiago.

In Haiti, we have an illegitimate government without a leader. In Peru, there is a leader without a legitimate government. Neither situation is acceptable; both must return to democracy.

If the OAS were to settle for anything less or if we were merely to pay lip-service to the Santiago Commitment, we would be condoning and perhaps even encouraging those who threaten or degrade democratic principles.

Canada is determined that the impasse in Haiti not continue indefinitely. The illegitimate regime in Haiti has thwarted every attempt to restore democracy to the Haitian people. Canada will continue to enforce sanctions, as we all agreed last October.

At the same time, we recognize that the Haitian people are suffering great hardship as a result of the constitutional crisis. Canada, therefore, will continue to provide food aid and other humanitarian assistance in accordance with resolutions 1/91 and 2/91.

We have just allocated a further \$5.0 million for this purpose, bringing to \$7.5 million the amount that Canada has allocated to humanitarian assistance since the coup. I would encourage all governments to assist in alleviating the suffering in Haiti.

In Peru, two OAS missions met with people representing all democratic elements of the political spectrum. I was pleased that Canada was able to participate. And, indeed, it is a mark of the success of our efforts that President Fujimori felt it necessary to appear before us.

I am disappointed at his continued lack of flexibility, but am encouraged that he has met our demand for an elected constituent assembly.

We must continue to press the Government of Peru for a full and early return to democracy, and we must not shrink from further action if necessary.

Peruvians must find their own way back to democracy, but, if their leaders provide them with a flawed process for that return, we should not legitimize it.

Canada, for one, will refuse to provide the same level of economic support to a regime that deprives its people of democracy. Humanitarian assistance will continue; but direct support to the government will be suspended until full democracy is restored. It will not be business as usual with this President.

Canada has supported OAS efforts to restore constitutional democracy with a firm -- some would say uncompromising -- stand, but not because we wish to see one particular form or model of democracy imposed on any member state. Such an approach does not offer lasting solutions. We know full well that there is no single, neatly developed model of democracy, which can be shipped from one setting to another.

In this room, we have representatives of presidential and parliamentary systems, federal and unitary systems, with formal and informal channels for national dialogue. No two are exactly alike. Each has served its people well; each has had difficulties.

But, while at times democratic systems can be slow, inefficient and frustrating, undemocratic systems have been shown by history to be far worse.

What cannot vary are the fundamental components of democracy. Some of these are tangible and specific: an independent, credible judiciary; basic liberties such as freedom of expression and association; respect for human rights; women's equality; the rule of law; and honest, reliable law enforcement agencies.

What is also required is a "culture" of democracy, a culture that includes tolerance and trust and respect for the individual. This culture must permeate all the workings of society.

Many have held that there can be no real democracy without economic development. There is an element of truth in this proposition.

But one could also argue that no real economic development is possible -- certainly over the long run -- without the participation of the people, men and women equally, to ensure that both economic effort and gains are equitably shared.

This is what Canada had in mind in 1990 when we proposed the creation of a Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD). We were pleased in 1991 that this assembly passed a further resolution confirming the mandate of the unit.

The unit was conceived to help countries in their own efforts to consolidate democratic gains. It would not rely on any one form of democracy, but would reinforce those that already existed. It would work with governments to strengthen the roots, the institutions and the attitudes that allow democracies to thrive. Periodic elections alone do not constitute democracy, nor does the monitoring of elections alone ensure the promotion of democracy.

The unit could, over time, provide security to all democratically elected governments and would threaten no one except, perhaps, would-be dictators.

Canada believes that the unit is needed -- and the events of the past ten months have surely borne this out. We have been disappointed at the lack of progress in its implementation.

We believe that the program of support developed and approved by the Permanent Council last year is a good one. We also believe that the unit should have its own executive director and a reasonable budget to execute its program.

We had hoped that changing priorities -- and they certainly should be changing -- would have allowed funds to be reallocated from other, less urgent activities.

The Inter-American Defence Board comes to mind. There seems to be agreement that the board's role and mandate should be reviewed in light of changing security concerns in the post-Cold War era. Surely when the main threat to democracy is from the military, the OAS should be shifting funds from a military activity to a democratic one.

I would encourage the Secretary General to give this serious consideration.

Canada will do its part. We are currently supporting the Partnership for Democracy and Development (PDD) in its efforts to promote democracy and development in Central America. We will also support the unit with direct technical and financial assistance. And today, I am pleased to announce that Canada will allocate \$1 million in additional funds directly to the unit to get it started on the work plan approved last year.

The need is obvious. The goal is unquestionable. I cannot think of a higher priority for the OAS to pursue at this time.

Mr. President, the actions we take to defend democracy in accordance with our charter is the standard by which we all will be judged. This issue will decide whether the OAS is a viable institution, one with a meaningful role to play in the Americas.

Canada supported the Commitment of Santiago because we saw an opportunity to act through the institutions of the OAS to support democratic traditions and ideals. This is our common heritage, this is our common goal, this is our collective responsibility.

I am confident that, despite the obstacles, democracy will thrive once again throughout the Americas, and we will be able to provide a future of peace and justice for all the peoples of the hemisphere.

Thank you.