

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada



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First Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Americas
Brasilia
July 20-21, 1998

Report of the Canadian Delegation

The First Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Americas, under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS), took place in Brasilia, Brazil, on July 20 and 21, 1998. The concrete results of the meeting have been positive, if somewhat modest. The discussions focussed largely on the procedures for putting in place a coordinating mechanism responsible for implementing the Summit of the Americas' Action Plan in the field of education. Ministers approved a coordinating group comprising 11 countries, including Canada, which has become a permanent member until the next summit. However, there is still confusion surrounding education objectives and the results that should be reported at the next summit, to be held in Canada. No date has been set for another meeting. Canada has taken advantage of the meeting to expand its influence within this forum and make headway on such files as the College of the Americas. Documents mentioned in this report are available from CMEC Secretariat.

REPORT

The First Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Americas (the meeting), held under the auspices of the International Council for Integral Development (CIDI) of the OAS and the first meeting since the 2nd Summit of the Americas in Santiago, took place in Brasilia, Brazil, on July 20 and 21, 1998. Twenty-nine countries (of a total of 34) sent a delegation. There were some major absences, however, including the education ministers for Mexico (the country that has been responsible for coordinating the education file since the Miami Summit), Costa Rica, and Grenada, whose prime minister speaks on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). On the other hand, several countries with OAS observer status, as well as a number of international financial institutions (IFIs) also sent representatives. The Canadian delegation was headed by the Honourable Roger Grimes, Minister of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador, and included representatives from the Government of Quebec, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and Industry Canada. The list of members is attached.

The Brasilia meeting consisted of three parts: (1) a meeting of the coordinating group (Group of 11) on July 19 to finalize the agenda for the ministers' meeting and the documents to be ratified by the ministers; (2) the ministers' meeting itself; and (3) a "technical" meeting on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 21, and the morning of Wednesday, July 22, to review the various projects, as well as the funding procedures to be sponsored under the Education Action Plan of the 2nd Summit of the Americas and the Inter-American Education Program of the OAS. Each component of the ministers' meeting was characterized by lengthy debates and sharp differences of opinion between and within certain delegations, making it necessary to create sub-working groups to resolve the impasses emerging from the discussions.

Accompanied by the Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. César Gavaría, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil opened the meeting. Brazil's Minister of Education and Sports, Paulo Renato Souza, acted as chair.

The ministerial meeting consisted of three parts: (1) review and approval of the plan to implement the Education Action Plan of the 2nd Summit of the Americas; (2) review and approval of the Action Plan follow-up mechanism; and (3) presentation on CIDI and review of its Inter-American Education Program.

Mr. Carlos Mancera Corcuera, Deputy Secretary of Planning and Coordination (Public Education Secretariat of Mexico) and representing Mexico's Department of Education, recapped the major themes of the Education Action Plan and of the discussions to date on the implementation of multilateral projects. In a move that came as a surprise to some participants but less so to representatives of the countries sitting on the Coordinating Group, the Chilean representative on the Inter-American Development Branch (IDB), Mario Marcel, confirmed the existence of an inter-agency group mandated to assist and advise countries on the drafting and submission of education projects to the appropriate IFIs.

As arranged the previous day, during the meeting of the Coordinating Group, Minister Grimes was authorized by the chair to have the president of the College of the Americas, Dr. Paulo A. Gomez, give a brief presentation on the project. Dr. Gomez confirmed Canada's support of \$3 million through CIDA, and the project was well received by all those attending the meeting.

As predicted, the most contentious item, and the one leading to the fiercest debate, was the mechanism for implementing the Education Action Plan of the Summit of the Americas. The proposal by Brazil on the follow-up mechanism, a proposal that had emerged from the preparatory meeting in Mexico in late June and was reworked by the Group of 11 in Brasilia on the eve of the meeting, generated animated discussions among the ministers and participants seated around the table.

Some of the Caribbean countries, led by the Bahamas, along with a certain number of Latin American countries, complained of not having seen the document in advance, and Bolivia and Venezuela flatly rejected the proposal and indicated they would refuse to sign. Emergency negotiations among the education ministers and officials of a limited number of countries (Canada among them) paved the way for a compromise, which was approved by all the countries in attendance. The new compromise was submitted to the participants in the meeting at the end of the day on Monday, July 20, and it was not until Tuesday morning, before the proceedings of the third plenary session got under way, that it was approved.

At that time, the education ministers agreed that (1) the group of coordinating countries established at the Santiago Summit would continue its work until December 31, 1998, after which (2) the current coordination mechanism (i.e., the four coordinating countries identified in Santiago—Mexico as chair, Chile, Argentina, and the United States) would remain in place until

the next summit, (3) but to this group of countries would be added Brazil and Canada as permanent members, until the next Summit. (4) Five countries would join the group according to the principle of annual rotation and the criterion of geographical representation, to wit, one country from the Andean Community, one from the Central American region, one from MERCOSUR (the common market involving Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil), and two from the Caribbean. The above countries constitute the Group of 11. (5) The new group would hold meetings, in theory on a semi-annual basis (it was proposed that the next meeting of the Group of 11 take place at OAS headquarters around mid-November 1998). (6) All documents would be shared in advance among all the countries to allow them to participate on an equal footing. (7) In accordance with Canada's wishes, the resolution approved by the education ministers would not only confirm but strengthen the non-arm's-length relationship that exists between this coordination group and the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), since it gives the latter the power to amend, if deemed appropriate, the current structure of the Coordinating Group.

The Canadian delegation welcomes this coordinating mechanism, even though it risks creating a certain amount of red tape.

This discussion had been preceded by a presentation by the Mexican education coordinator, Ms. Sofialecía Morales Garza, on a prototype of a Web site designed to serve as a tool for communication and cooperation among the countries of the Americas. Each country was invited to contribute (Canada is already cooperating through CMEC).

The third plenary session was mainly devoted to OAS efforts at implementing the Summit's Education Action Plan. The executive secretary of CIDI, Mr. Lionel Zuñiga, made a short presentation on the nature and operations of the Council, followed by a presentation by Mr. Francisco José Piñon of the Argentinian delegation on the OAS Inter-American Education Program. It emerged that this program will seek to implement six action strategies identified at the summit in previously identified priority areas, over the next three years, with this implementation to be assessed yearly. (The program was discussed in detail at the meeting of the technical group late Tuesday afternoon, and Canada indicated its interest in participating in three multinational projects. Canada, as a member of the Coordinating Group (Group of 11), will be called on to participate in technical meetings aimed at helping countries design, prepare, and present projects to the OAS. A meeting for this purpose is already scheduled for Washington next August 17. CMEC will send a representative).

The ministers' meeting came to a close with the adoption of six resolutions, including the one dealing with the new mechanism for implementing the action plan. The session was adjourned at 12:45 p.m. The technical group meeting got under way at 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday (the details of this group's discussions can be found in the second part of this report).

RESULTS

The concrete results of the Meeting of Ministers of Education are positive, if somewhat modest. The main substantive element was the adoption of a coordinating mechanism for implementing the Education Action Plan adopted in Santiago, which is intended to be more democratic; Canada has become a permanent member until the next summit. Since the last host of a summit automatically becomes a permanent member of the Coordinating Group, Canada will most likely remain associated with the education file for the three years following the summit in Canada.

In the eyes of the Canadian delegation, a stronger SIRG seems to have emerged from this exercise, for not only is it clear that the implementation mechanism must answer to the SIRG, but the latter now has the power to change the mechanism in place if so desired.

The Canadian delegation also took advantage of the meeting to make significant headway on the College of the Americas file and to expand Canada's influence and authority in education with several countries in the hemisphere. One of the reasons for this is that since November 1997, Canada has been represented at all the preparatory meetings and has thus been able to solidify its interpersonal contacts with the education communities in the Americas. To consolidate Canada's influence in this sector, DFAIT and CMEC should ensure Canadian participation in as many meetings as possible; this depends on the ongoing presence of officials apprised of the discussions on education in the Americas.

Lastly, all the members of the Canadian delegation would like to thank the staff of the Canadian Embassy in Brasilia, especially Ambassador Nancy Stiles and Silvia Reis, for their hospitality and invaluable logistical support throughout the meeting.

**Report on Technical Meetings held
before (July 19, 1998) and
after (July 21 (p.m.), and July 22 (a.m.), 1998)
the Meeting of Ministers of Education, in Brasilia,
in reference to the Action Plans for Education of
the Second Summit of the Americas**

- The Canadian delegation to the technical meetings on education matters was led by Elaine Freeland, Sous-ministre adjointe, ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, and was composed of Darren Schemmer, Canadian mission to the OAS, Richard Martin, DFAIT, Jean-Marie Barrette, Délégation générale du Québec au Mexique, and David Gaszi, Industry Canada.
- The Coordinating Group of 11 countries, of which Canada is a member, met on July 19, 1998, in the offices of the External Affairs Ministry in Brasilia.
- The agenda of the July 19 meeting consisted of the following:
 1. final adjustments to the proposed agenda of the Meeting of Ministers of Education (July 20, July 21 (a.m.), 1998) (Appendix 1)
 2. further modifications to the "Declaration concerning follow-up mechanisms" to the Plan of Action (Appendix 2)
 3. examination of resolutions to be adopted by the ministers of education
 4. examination of the Draft for the Inter-American Programme of Education (Appendix 3)

Appendices can be obtained from the CMEC Secretariat on request.

- Without going into detail on these items, it might be noted that with regard to **1.** Canada took the opportunity to ensure that Minister Grimes would have the permission of the chair to introduce a representative of the College of the Americas at the ministers' meeting.

The Declaration, **2.**, which was re-worded on July 19, was further modified on July 20 before being adopted by the ministers.

The resolutions, **3.**, were approved on July 22, 1998.

- The technical meeting following the meeting of ministers was convened and chaired by Mexico, the vice-chair being Brazil. All countries of the western hemisphere, with the exception of Cuba, were invited to this meeting.
- The agenda of this meeting consisted of explanations and clarifications of the modus operandi for OAS projects and non-OAS Summit of the Americas projects.
- OAS projects (Appendix 5)
 - In order to support the initiatives of the Second Summit of the Americas in the field of education, the OAS has aligned its “Inter-American Programme of Education” with the Summit Plan of Action.
 - The OAS will make available up to \$2 million US to implement the projects in 1999.
 - Most, if not all, projects are planned for the next three years, but OAS projects are reviewed or determined on an annual basis.
 - There are six OAS “multilateral” projects scheduled for implementation in 1999:
 - a. Education for Social Sectors Requiring Priority Attention
(Line 1. Compensatory education)
Coordinating Country: Mexico (Appendix a)
 - b. Professionalization of Teachers and Educational Administrators
(Lines 3 and 9)
Coordinating Country: Colombia (Appendix b)
 - c. Strengthening Educational Management and Administration and Institutional Development
(Line 4)
Coordinating Country: Argentina (Appendix c)
 - d. Education for Work and Youth Development
(Line 5)
Coordinating Country: Brazil (Appendix d)
 - e. Education for Citizenship and Sustainability in Multi-cultural Societies
(Lines 6 and 7)
Coordinating Country: Mexico (Appendix e)

f. Exchange of Teachers and Students for Study of the OAS Official Languages
(Lines 6 and 7)

Coordinating Country: Mexico (Appendix f)

- The chair of the meeting requested and insisted that each country express, at the very least, "preliminary interest" in these projects. Canada indicated interest in projects a, b, and f (Appendix 6).
- Since these projects must be submitted to the OAS before August 30, Canada requested and obtained an extension of this timeline until September 30. This simply means that Canada could become involved in these or other projects in 1999. Funding, however, will be based on requirements of countries indicated in the project design, submitted on or before August 30.
- The process for submission and approval of OAS projects is as follows:

Step 1. Within one week countries should confirm interest expressed in Brasilia.

Step 2. Countries accepting responsibility for initial drafting of projects were identified in Brasilia:

(Project a. Mexico and Argentina

Project b. Brazil

Project c. Bolivia

Project d. Venezuela

Project e. Mexico

Project f. Barbados)

These initial projects will be presented to the countries having confirmed their interest, at programming meetings, to be held in Washington, on August 17 and/or August 18, 1998.

Step 3. Projects are to be presented to OAS, before August 30, 1998, by national OAS representatives.

Step 4. Assessment of projects by OAS technical team will take place.

Step 5. Projects will be presented to CEPCIDI for approval.

Step 6. Resources will be available January 1, 1999.

N.B. These resources could be made available to the country responsible for the project and subsequently allocated to partner-countries.

OR

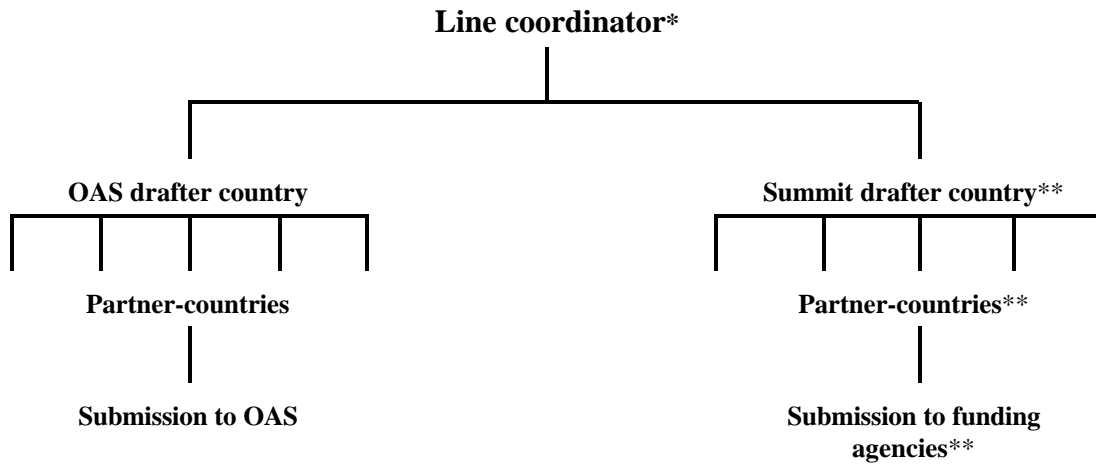
The resources could be distributed, by OAS, to partner-countries directly.

In order to be eligible for funding, the country concerned must have previously pledged its contribution to the education fund.

The Canadian contribution to the education program of the OAS for 1999 is in the order of US\$400,000.

- Summit projects (non-OAS)
 - Seven Summit projects have been adopted.
 - These “regional projects” will be submitted to the various international funding agencies in order to obtain technical or financial resources.
 - The seven Summit projects will deal with the following:
 - S.a. Internships for Teachers and Administrators (Colombia)
 - S.b. Educational Indicators (Chile)
 - S.c. Educational Evaluation (Brazil)
 - S.d. Centres for Excellence in Education and Pedagogy (Dominican Republic)
 - S.e. Fellowships for Educational Administrators (Argentina)
 - S.f. Information Technologies — Science and Mathematics (Colombia)
 - S.g. Distance Education (Mexico)
 - N.B. The Canadian delegation reacted to this mix of content focus and strategies and subsequently offered to develop a matrix that might help in building multi-dimensional projects.
 - Once more the chair insisted on indications of “preliminary interest” in these areas. Canada expressed interest in S.b., S.d., and S.f. (Appendix 7).
 - Drafting countries were identified as indicated in brackets.
 - The project design for Summit projects will be circulated to countries having expressed interest.
 - A liaison group led by Mario Marcel of Chile will assist the design groups and advise countries on presentation of projects to funding agencies.

This organizational structure might be represented as follows:



* The Line Coordinator has no supervisory function, but will be kept informed of project submissions.

** Assistance by Inter-agency Group (Mario Marcel)

Recommendations to CMEC

- Obtain project design (OAS project) following meetings in Washington, August 17, 1998.
- Summarize information on Summit initiatives — organizational structure, strategies, content, and projects.
- Present to ministers of education in September with a view to making them aware of the initiatives and of Canada's involvement, leading up to Third Summit in Canada:
 - offering them the possibility of joining ongoing projects in 1999
 - encouraging a planned involvement in project development and possibly leadership in 2000 and 2001
 - obtaining a clear mandate for representatives on Coordinating Group (Canada is a member)
 - planning possible budget commitments
 - obtaining support for increase in CMEC resources from the federal government

Summary of Responsibilities

(Summit projects S.a.-S.g.)

- Line 1. Compensatory programmes — Coordinator: **Mexico**
- (a) – OAS project drafter: *Mexico/Argentina*
– Summit project drafter: —
- Line 2. Indicators — Coordinator: **Brazil**
- OAS project drafter: —
 - (S.b.) – Summit project drafter: *Chile*
- Educational evaluation
- OAS project drafter: —
 - (S.c.) – Summit project drafter: *Brazil*
- Line 3. Teacher training — Coordinator: **Colombia**
- (b) – OAS project drafter: *Colombia*
 - (S.d.) – Summit project drafter: *Dominican Republic*
(S.a.) *Colombia*
- Line 4. Educational management — Coordinator: **Argentina**
- (c) – OAS project drafter: *Argentina*
 - (S.e.) – Summit project drafter: *Argentina*
- Line 5. Transition to work — Coordinator: **Brazil**
- (d) – OAS project drafter: *Brazil*
– Summit project drafter: —
- Lines 6. & 7. Multi-cultural and values education — Coordinator: **Mexico**
- (e.) (f.) – OAS project drafter: *Mexico*
– Summit project drafter: —
- Line 8. Technologies — Coordinator: **Brazil**
- OAS project drafter:
 - (S.f.) (S.g.) – Summit project drafter: *Brazil/Mexico*