

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)



Second Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Americas September 24-25, 2001 Punta del Este, Uruguay

REPORT OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION

Head of Delegation

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Deputy Head of Delegation

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- 1 Ministers and representatives from 18 countries of the Americas met in Punta del Este to review the progress on education-related initiatives in the Americas between the Second (1998) and Third (2001) Summits of the Americas, and to plan further achievements. The Minister of Education and Culture of Uruguay chaired the meeting.
- 2 Canada's delegation was led by the Chair of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the Honourable Glenn Hugel, Minister, Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, Saskatchewan.
- 3 The discussion by ministers, in considering past work and future work, was set within the context of the five axes identified for education-related action at the 3rd Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, Canada, April 2001), namely:
 - i) equity and quality
 - ii) school management, social participation, decentralization, and teacher professional development
 - iii) youth learning, secondary education, and certification of acquired skills
 - iv) higher education, the public university, and student exchange
 - v) education-related information and communications technology (ICT)
- 4 Ministers considered options for the management of education projects between meetings of the summits and discussed the most appropriate ways of engaging the international financing agencies to support work in the Americas.
- 5 Ministers assisted at the launch of the Educational Portal of the Americas — an on-line instrument for the dissemination of opportunities for distance learning throughout the Americas.
- 6 Of special interest to Canadian authorities was the presentation on the new Institute for Connectivity in the Americas, which is located in Canada and forms part of Canada's contribution to the common goals supported by hemispheric leaders at the 2001 Summit of the Americas.
- 7 Ministers received a presentation on initiatives pertaining to the involvement and participation of civil society. Of particular note was the presentation by M. Berthelot on the creation of a Continental Secretariat on Education which took place in Punta del Este in parallel with the ministerial meeting.
- 8 Two Canadian non-governmental organizations, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) and the Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ) hosted a Continental Forum on Education during the 3rd Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City in April. A Declaration was released by the participants at the Forum in Quebec and is available from the CMEC Secretariat.

- 9 Members endorsed a ministerial statement on the main lines of discussion at their meeting, then issued a separate release against violence, repudiating the recent attacks on the United States of America (USA) — copies of both documents are attached.
- 10 The presentation by the Minister of Education of Chile, as lead on the Educational Indicators Regional Project (PRIE), of an educational outlook for the hemisphere was well received. Canadian authorities indicated their support for this project, underlining the importance of good data to support policy development. Minister Legault shared copies of recent statistics in Quebec pertinent to the discussion.
- 11 Canadian authorities contributed information on 28 examples of exemplary programs, in the context of the five core education issues noted under paragraph 3 above. A permanent portfolio of such projects will be developed and maintained on an on-going basis by the Unit of Social Development and Education (USDE) of the Organization of American States (OAS). The compendium will provide a basis for sharing information and expertise in the hemisphere (horizontal cooperation). A separate (limited) compendium of 14 programs has been identified for immediate consideration; the CMEC School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) is among these programs.
- 12 Considerable attention and debate occurred when considering the mandate given to the OAS (Unit for Social Development and Education) by the Third Summit of the Americas to identify and set up appropriate hemispheric mechanisms to ensure follow-up on education-related initiatives between meetings of the Summits.
- 13 A proposal to create an Inter-American Committee on Education (IACE) generated considerable confusion over the possible mandate and management structure. What was lacking from the discussion was information on the corporate implications within the OAS for the creation of and operating guidelines for such a committee.
- 14 As an interim step, ministers agreed to maintain the current coordinating mechanism (Group of 11 countries) with the understanding that all countries would be invited to be part of the mechanism. It was further agreed that the OAS would continue to provide the necessary support to the Group of 11. The Group of 11 was charged with the task of considering a proposal, to be developed by the OAS Secretariat, on the creation of an Intercontinental Committee on Education, taking into account existing models and regulations for such bodies under the OAS. The timeline established for development of the proposal was three months. All ministers of education will be consulted and their approval of such a committee will be sought through the appropriate channels of the OAS, prior to the establishment of any proposed Intercontinental Committee on Education.
- 15 As a member of the Group of 11, Canadian authorities will have an important role to play in the follow-up to the ministers' meeting.