



September 11, 2001

**FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAS ADOPT
INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER, BY ACCLAMATION**

The Hemisphere's Foreign Ministers by acclamation today adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter, a new tool designed to bolster Organization of American States (OAS) mechanisms to promote democracy while defending it against all threats.

Meeting in plenary session in Lima, with Peru's Foreign Affairs Minister Diego García Sayán presiding, the 28th special session of the OAS General Assembly opened its deliberations with the approval of the document, after which the Foreign Ministers and other heads of delegation made general statements.

Central to the five-chapter charter is democracy and its relationship to human rights, integral development and the war on poverty. The main purpose of this democracy charter is to strengthen and preserve the democratic system. Its clauses include a provision stating that any unconstitutional alteration or disruption of the democratic order in a member state "constitutes an insurmountable obstacle" to participation of that state's government in various forums of the OAS.

In that context, and under the terms of the Charter of the OAS itself, the General Assembly would convene a special session and, after determining that democracy has been disrupted, it would "take a decision to suspend said member state from the exercise of its right to participate in the OAS, by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the member states."

The Inter-American Democratic Charter approved in the Peruvian capital stems from a mandate from the Third Summit of the Americas held last April in Quebec City, Canada, at the initiative of the then transitional government of Peru. A draft Charter was submitted to the regular session of the OAS General Assembly in San José, Costa Rica, last June, when a decision taken to form a working group to expand and strengthen the document. Colombia's Ambassador to the OAS, Humberto de la Calle, chaired that working group.