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Special Summit of the Americas

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American Eagle

Summit of the Americas

The United States and the Summit of the Americas

*An update on U.S. actions to implement the hemisphere's agenda
January 2004*

Together, let us go forward to build an age of prosperity in a hemisphere of liberty. Together, let us use this Summit of the Americas to launch the century of the Americas.

-- President George W. Bush, Quebec City, Canada, April 21, 2001

Three months after his inauguration in 2001, President George W. Bush attended the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada, joining the 33 other democratic leaders of the hemisphere in renewing and expanding their common agenda for the hemisphere. This agenda, built on the accomplishments and work initiated in the 1994 Miami Summit and the 1998 Santiago Summit, reflects the values of democracy, human rights, and open markets shared by the region's leaders, and their acknowledged responsibility to actively defend those values.

The Summit of the Americas is a unique mechanism for the heads of state and heads of governments to discuss solutions to common political, economic, and social problems in a multilateral and comprehensive way. The Quebec City Summit focused on strengthening democracy, creating prosperity, and realizing human potential. Leaders at the Quebec City Summit mandated creation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and emphasized the need to address areas like health, education and equitable growth that directly improve people's quality of life.

Since 2001, the United States has committed hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of hours of labor to make this common vision a reality. U.S. National Coordinator for the Summit of the Americas Ambassador John F. Maisto oversees U.S. efforts to implement this hemispheric agenda. The following are highlights of actions related to each of the eighteen initiatives stemming from the Quebec Summit¹.

Summit of Americas Plan of Action

1. Making Democracy Work Better	10. Agriculture Management and Rural Development
2. Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	11. Labor and Employment
3. Justice, Rule of Law, Security of the Individual	12. Growth with Equity
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6. Trade, Investment, and Financial Stability	15. Gender Equality
7. Infrastructure and Regulatory Environment	16. Indigenous Peoples
8. Disaster Management	17. Cultural Diversity
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¹ The full texts of the Quebec City Declaration and Plan of Action, along with information on how civil society organizations can get involved in the Summit process, are www.summitsoftheamericas.org.

***Making
Democracy
Work
Better***

On September 11, 2001, Secretary of State Colin Powell and other foreign ministers adopted the [Inter-American Democratic Charter](#). Through this Charter, 34 nations of the Americas acknowledged the essential elements of democracy and committed themselves to practice, protect and promote its principles. Member states have applied the Charter in Venezuela and referred to it in the course of seeking solutions for Haiti.

As a member of the convening group of the global [Community of Democracies](#) (CD), the United States worked with other hemispheric CD members at the second CD ministerial meeting in Seoul, Korea in 2002 to highlight the Inter-American Democratic Charter as a model for other regions. The United States is working with host Chile in planning for the next CD Ministerial in 2004.

In 2002 and 2003, the United States contributed \$260 million toward [strengthening democratic systems and elections observation](#) throughout the hemisphere. This included elections-related assistance to Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru.

The United States is one of 29 countries in the hemisphere that has ratified the [Inter-American Convention against Corruption](#), the first internationally binding agreement to focus specifically on corruption. The Convention has already proved valuable in facilitating the extradition from the United States to Peru of two fugitives charged in a corruption scandal, and a [Follow-Up Mechanism](#) mandated by leaders at Quebec is monitoring implementation of the Convention to ensure that countries take full advantage of the Convention to fight corruption.

President Bush announced the [American Fellows Program](#) at the Quebec Summit to promote excellence in government through the exchange of government personnel. Exchanges began in 2002 are continuing to develop through the present day.

***Human Rights
and
Fundamental
Freedoms***

The United States ratified two Protocols to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 2002. The Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict makes it a crime to force children into military service, raises the age for the draft to 18, and promotes cooperation to rescue and rehabilitate former child combatants. The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, which requires countries to outlaw pornography and prostitution by children, provides

tools to improve law enforcement cooperation and to help ensure that offenders can be prosecuted regardless of where they are found. Its extensive provisions on cooperation and prevention will help child victims receive protection and assistance.

The United States has worked to strengthen human rights protections by supporting additional funding for the [inter-American human rights system](#) and by providing funds to strengthen governmental and non-governmental organizations at a national level charged with preventing human rights violations.

The United States provided funding support for the Hemispheric Conference on International Migration: Human Rights and Trafficking in Persons in the Americas, co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the collaboration of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which took place in Santiago, Chile in November 2002.

***Justice, Rule
of Law, Security of
the
Individual***

The United States actively participates in the [Inter-American Drug Abuse Commission \(CICAD\)](#) <http://web.archive.org/web/20040616233721/http://www.cicad.oas.org/> and its unique [Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism \(MEM\)](#). CICAD is helping strengthen regional cooperation on drug-related matters, while the MEM is helping countries in the hemisphere assess our collective progress against the drug problem.

In 2002 and 2003, the United States devoted over \$81.1 million for [justice and anticorruption support](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The United States is a core contributor, with the Inter-American Development Bank and other donors, to the [Justice Studies Center of the Americas](#), which works to raise the quality of justice systems throughout the Americas.

Hemispheric Security

The United States and 32 other states have signed the [Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism](#) since the OAS General Assembly adopted the text in June 2002. In July of 2003, the Convention entered into force. The Convention will help strengthen regional cooperation, particularly related to financial and border controls, technical assistance and mutual legal assistance.

Following its successful January 2003 meeting in San Salvador, the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) established itself as the hemisphere's primary multilateral vehicle for counterterrorism cooperation. At the January meeting, the United States pledged \$1 million to build on CICTE's existing work to assist hemispheric efforts to strengthen counterterrorism legal regimes, border and financial controls.

The United States is among those leading regional efforts to [strengthen hemispheric security](#) through a multilateral process mandated by Quebec Summit. In February 2003, the United States hosted a [Meeting of Experts on Confidence and Security Building Measures](#). This meeting, which featured active consultations with civil society, adopted a strong Declaration and an Illustrative List of measures as a basis for active steps by states in the hemisphere trying to overcome historical legacies, tension, and hostility. In October 2003 the United States participated in the [Special Conference on Security](#), where countries built on existing frameworks and complemented them with a cooperative hemispheric security approach that will effectively address both traditional and new threats, concerns and challenges in the region. The product of the Conference, the "Declaration on Security in the Americas," provides a practical guide for resolving interstate border tensions, lowering pressure for arms spending, promoting democratic norms, and fostering a climate of confidence, trust, transparency, and cooperation in our Hemisphere.

Civil Society

The U.S. Government regularly consults civil society on the negotiations for the [Free Trade Area of the Americas \(FTAA\)](#). The negotiating texts for the FTAA Agreement have been released twice to the public and there is an open and ongoing invitation for [public comment on the FTAA texts and process](#). The FTAA Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society meets to coordinate input from civil society into the process and arrange for public hearings throughout the FTAA negotiations.

The United States strongly supports efforts to institutionalize and broaden [civil society participation in the Summit process and the OAS](#). The U.S. Government helped fund and participated with representatives of 71 civil society organizations from 21 countries of the Americas in the Regional Forum on [Civil Society in the Process of Hemispheric Integration within the Framework of the Special Summit of the Americas](#), hosted by the Government of Mexico in November 2003. The U.S. Government is working to establish a mechanism for regular consultations with U.S. civil society organizations on the Summits process, and encourages civil society groups to register and participate in OAS and Summit meetings.

The United States funds the [Inter-American Democracy Network \(IADN\)](#), a network of 229 civil society organizations in 24 countries of the Americas, as a means of supporting civil society participation in the Summit process. The IADN provides training on techniques and methodologies to increase citizen participation in decision-making. IADN members led in the formulation of national Summit agendas in 18 countries, are leading civil society efforts to monitor Summit implementation, and consult regularly with the OAS on Summit initiatives.

Trade, Investment, and Financial Stability

The United States continues active negotiations for a [Free Trade Area of the Americas \(FTAA\)](#), which are scheduled for conclusion by January 2005. Originally proposed at the Miami Summit of the Americas in 1994, the hemisphere's leaders recommitted themselves to the FTAA at the 2001 Quebec Summit. The FTAA will create the world's largest free trade market

The U.S. is strongly committed to the Hemispheric Cooperation Program (HCP), a program designed to help small economies participate in, implement, and adjust to the FTAA. In recent years, total U.S. support for [trade capacity building](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean has nearly tripled to \$150 million in 2003 from \$52 million in 1999.

The United States is advancing trade liberalization competitively throughout the hemisphere. The United States signed a free trade agreement with [Chile](#) in June 2003, has concluded free trade negotiations with [El Salvador](#), [Guatemala](#), [Honduras](#), and [Nicaragua](#), and is working towards an agreement with Costa Rica. The United States has also announced its intent to negotiate new trade deals with the [Dominican Republic](#), [Panama](#), [Colombia](#), [Peru](#), [Ecuador](#), and [Bolivia](#).

The United States has signed eleven [Bilateral Investment Treaties \(BITs\)](#) with countries in the Western Hemisphere and recently announced its intent to negotiate a new treaty with [Uruguay](#). The United States has also incorporated similar investor protections in its bilateral trade agreements within the region. These BITs help make investment more attractive by providing greater security for investors and strengthening the economic linkages between the United States and other countries.

Recognizing that businesses have a central role to play in building prosperous societies that benefit all citizens, the United States co-sponsored, with the Inter-American Development Bank, the first hemisphere-wide conference on [Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\)](#) in September 2002. Over 500 representatives from business, civil society, government, multilateral organizations, and the media gathered to discuss the benefits of corporate social responsibility and to explore opportunities for partnerships among different sectors of society. The United States has continued its support of this vital issue by cosponsoring the October 2003 follow-up Inter-American Conference on Corporate Social Responsibility in Panama.

***Infrastructure and
Regulatory
Environment***

The United States is engaged in efforts to promote improved communications throughout our hemisphere. The hemispheric leaders' statement on "Connecting the Americas" at the Quebec Summit provided the basis for an Agenda on Connectivity that encourages development of the telecommunications infrastructure and human resource training to ensure access for all. Governments and the private sector are now working to realize this Agenda through the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL).

The United States co-chairs the [Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative \(WHTI\)](#), which provides a forum for addressing transportation-related issues such as security, cooperation, and disaster preparedness and response. The Inter-American Transportation Ministerial, which took place in May 2003 in Mexico, helped reinforce our commitment to closer, safer hemispheric linkages.

Through the [Third Border Initiative](#), the United States is providing Caribbean countries with airport security and aviation safety training, fellowships and on-the-ground direct technical assistance, with the goal of assuring that travelers in the Caribbean region enjoy the highest standards for safety and security.

The United States provides assistance for ports and maritime commerce throughout the region. In cooperation with the Organization of American States, U.S. officials provide training in [port security](#) and assist countries with port security self-assessments. In 2002, most OAS member countries participated in port security training and about 200 individuals received instruction. The United States is also at work on a NAFTA maritime superhighway project.

Disaster Management

The United States co-sponsored the Summit-mandated [Disaster Risk Reduction Hemispheric Conference](#) in December 2001, which brought together disaster relief experts, members of civil society, insurance companies, government agencies and donors to create a plan for mitigating the impacts of natural hazards and improving reconstruction efforts.

The United States supports an extensive risk-management training program in the region that strengthens the capacity of Latin American and Caribbean countries to prepare for and respond to disasters. Through courses such as Search and Rescue from Collapsed Structures and School Safety, first responders are better able to save lives in the immediate aftermath of disasters. The United States complements this work with targeted mitigation assistance that enhances the disaster management capabilities of national and regional institutions in the Hemisphere.

The United States supports [conferences and practical exercises in disaster management](#) for military and government representatives from throughout the Western Hemisphere. These programs include simulations of disaster scenarios, and provide valuable experience in developing crisis action plans. Sub regional planning conferences for the Andes, Caribbean, Central America, and Southern Cone complement larger regional exercises.

Through the [Third Border Initiative](#), the United States facilitates disaster management efforts throughout the Caribbean. Four countries in the region recently received U.S. support for community disaster preparedness, education, and mitigation, in cooperation with the American Red Cross. Additional U.S. support will help provide for a disaster management framework in the Caribbean

In December 2002, the United States hosted a [conference on satellite data for the Americas](#). Some 230 participants discussed the capacity for satellite systems to play an important role in effective disaster management. The United States also works with meteorological services in the region to help improve weather forecasting and understanding of the causes of natural disasters through the use of satellite data.

***Environmental
Foundation for
Sustainable
Development***

The United States is leading the way in environmental protection and debt mitigation through the [Tropical Forest Conservation Act](#). Since the Quebec Summit, the U.S. has allocated \$27.9 million to debt-for-nature agreements with El Salvador, Belize, Peru, and Panama, providing \$54 million in debt relief and generating \$43.6 million for conservation over the life of the agreements. Protected areas include a unique cloud forest in El Salvador, which is home to orchids, rare spider monkeys, pumas, toucans, and striped owls; a stretch of the Maya Mountain Marine Corridor in Belize that includes 16 miles of pristine Caribbean coastline; and a large part of the

Chagras River Basin in Panama, an ecologically significant area that is also an important source of water for the Panama Canal.

The United States and Central American countries reached final agreement on the [Central American-U.S. Joint Declaration Action Plan \(CONCAUSA\)](#) in March 2002. Six separate CONCAUSA action plans encourage cooperation in climate change, disaster preparedness, biodiversity, energy, environmental legislation, and sustainable economic development.

The United States is supporting innovative approaches to integrated watershed and marine ecosystem management through the [White Water to Blue Water Initiative \(WW2BW\)](#). The United States has committed over \$1.5 million in WW2BW-related projects directly targeting the Wider Caribbean region and has entered into \$1.5 million matching partnership with the UN Foundation to support a Meso-American Coral Reef Alliance in Mexico and Central America. The United States will co-sponsor a major conference on WW2BW for the Wider Caribbean Region in Miami this March.

The United States continues to promote innovative environmental programs through the [Enterprise for the Americas \(EAI\)](#). The EAI has reduced \$1 billion in bilateral debt and provided foundations in eight countries with endowments totaling \$175 million for environmental conservation, child survival, and child development activities.

The United States participated in the Summit-mandated meeting of [Health and Environment Ministers of the Americas](#) in March 2002. As a result of this meeting, the United States is further intensifying efforts to build linkages between health and the environment issues. For example, U.S. government health and environmental agencies are working closely together to develop children's environmental health indicators in the Americas.

The United States is a partner in the [Clean Air Initiative for Latin American Cities](#) and has worked collaboratively to transfer environmental decision-making tools to major cities in Latin America.

***Agriculture
Management
and
Rural Development***

The United States participated in the first and second [Inter-American Ministerial Meetings on Agriculture and Rural Life](#) in November 2001 and November 2003, respectively, where ministers agreed to encourage agricultural trade liberalization and rural development. At the second ministerial meeting, ministers adopted Plan AGRO 2003-2015, outlining steps to foster agricultural development and rural prosperity throughout the Hemisphere.

To promote discussion of cross-cutting agricultural issues, the United States took part in the April 2003 [Inter-American Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Health](#) in Washington. Representatives discussed the impact of concerns such as food safety, bioterrorism, and human development in rural communities.

Through the [Opportunity Alliance](#), the United States has provided nearly \$40 million to assist Central America and Mexico in realizing opportunities for trade, investment, and rural economic prosperity. The program focuses in particular on coffee growers by encouraging coffee quality improvement, competitive marketing, and business development and diversification.

*Labor
and
Employment*

The United States participates actively in the [Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor \(IACML\)](#), which ensures high-level consideration of the labor dimensions of globalization and hemispheric integration. Ministers have underscored the importance of considering the social and labor aspects of hemispheric integration in all stages of the negotiations process and the role of social dialogue, labor reforms and employment-generating policies to achieve economic recovery. The U.S. funds projects and workshops to support implementation of labor initiatives from the Quebec Summit of the Americas and the IACML.

Since 2001, the U.S. has provided over \$33 million in grants to assist 15 countries in the Americas to [combat hazardous child labor](#) in commercial sexual exploitation, agriculture, small-scale mining, domestic service and fireworks production.

*Growth
with
Equity*

The U.S. funds the [Inter-Summit Property Systems Initiative](#) to help coordinate efforts to register property and implement reforms throughout the hemisphere, according to the principles outlined in the Summit of the Americas. Governments, civil society, universities, and donor institutions participate in the initiative which seeks to facilitate information exchange through conferences, workshops, the web and to provide technical assistance.

The [Partnership for Prosperity](#) works to leverage private sector resources and expertise to boost the social and economic well-being of Mexican citizens, particularly in regions where economic growth has lagged. The Good Partner Award Program was created to recognize the important role of the U.S. and Mexican private sector, and under the Partnership U.S. and Mexican governments and financial institutions are bringing more people into the financial system and lowering the cost of sending money home. The [World Council of Credit Unions \(WOCCU\)](#), in partnership with the U.S. Government, is developing linkages between credits unions and other financial institutions in the United States and Mexico to increase access of the poor to low-cost remittance services and other financial products. Beyond Mexico, the U.S. is expanding its portfolio of activities with credit unions and other non-traditional financial institutions to increase the access of remittance receivers to financial services. The U.S. also supports activities to more effectively channel remittances from migrant groups in the U.S. to help with local community development projects in Mexico, El Salvador and Haiti.

In September of 2003 the United States hosted a Steering Committee meeting to launch the [SME Congress of the Americas](#). The SME Congress is a hemispheric network of micro, small and medium enterprise (SME) service providers created to enhance the ability of small business to effectively participate and benefit from international trade opportunities. Chile, who is co-chairing this initiative with the U.S., will host the first full SME Congress in October of 2004.

Education

President Bush announced the [Inter-American E-Business Fellowship Program](#) at the Quebec Summit, an initiative to train Latin American and Caribbean information technology leaders on how to better incorporate e-business principles into their companies. Forty-six fellows have completed the program in the last three years, and U.S. host companies have contributed over 7,000 hours of training.

At the Quebec Summit, President Bush announced a \$20 million initiative to establish regional [Centers of Excellence for Teacher Training](#) to improve reading instruction at early grade levels. Centers in the Caribbean, Central America and the Andes began training more than 1,300 teachers in the summer of 2003.

The United States funds the [Child Labor Education Initiative \(EI\)](#) to improve the accessibility and quality of basic education for children who have been involved in the worst forms of child labor or are at risk of becoming involved. EI projects are devoted exclusively to supporting education as a powerful intervention for combating child labor. In the Americas, EI programs totaling \$15 million are in place in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Peru, with future programs planned for in the CAFTA countries and Ecuador.

The [Civitas Latin America](#) project, funded under the U.S. Education for Democracy Act and administered by a consortium led by the Center for Civic Education, assists Latin American educators in implementing effective civic education programs at home, and to create civic education programs for students in the United States that help them better understand their own nation through the history and experiences of Latin American nations. Activities include delegation visits among U.S. and Latin American organizations and institutions, development of curricular material, and joint projects by U.S. and Latin American students.

Health

In June 2002, President Bush announced the \$500 million [International Mother to Child HIV Prevention \(PMTCT\) Initiative](#), which targets 14 countries in Africa and the Caribbean. The initiative includes programs in Haiti and Guyana, as well as a Caribbean regional initiative administered by U.S. Government agencies and the Caribbean Epidemiological Center (CAREC). Surveys of HIV/AIDS programs and local capacity are being used to create action plans that will address HIV prevention, care, and support in the most effective ways in each country.

President Bush announced a five-year, \$15 billion [Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief](#) in January 2003. The Plan, which will incorporate the PMTCT initiative, includes nearly \$10 billion in new funds for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care activities, targeting the same 14 countries in the Caribbean and Africa.

The President's Emergency Plan also includes \$1 billion over five years for the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria \(GFATM\)](#), raising the total U.S. pledge to \$1.62 billion, 34% of the Fund's \$4.8 billion resources. The GFATM's board, chaired by U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson, has already approved proposals for projects in nineteen Western Hemisphere countries.

The U.S. Government worked with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) to design the first [Health of the Americas Week \(April 7-14, 2003\)](#) to focus attention on environmental issues that affect children's health.

Gender Equality

In 2002, the U.S. was elected to the Executive Committee of the [OAS Inter-American Commission of Women \(CIM\)](#). A ground-breaking CIM resolution passed in 2001 urges countries to implement prevention, protection and prosecution programs, exchange information and best practices, develop joint programs, and ratify international instruments related to trafficking in persons, especially women, adolescents and children. The U.S. Government releases annual reports on [trafficking in persons](#) and is the major funder of OAS programs to combat trafficking in persons.

As a follow-up to the 2001 Summit, the OAS Permanent Council held a first special session in November 2002 to promote women's participation in the political process. The session attracted political and civil society figures from throughout the hemisphere, with the goal of highlighting gender equality as an important goal for democracies.

The United States funds numerous exchange and international visitor programs to help women in the hemisphere further their contributions to their own countries. Programs include leadership training, advocacy, networking and campaigning skills, and workshops on violence awareness and HIV/AIDS issues. The U.S. Government and the non-profit Public Forum Institute sponsored the [Women Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Summit](#) in March 2002, where President Bush announced key policy initiatives for small business. Various regional forums were organized around the United States in connection with the Summit.

Urging Americans to learn more about the problem of domestic violence and to take action in protecting communities and families from its effects, President Bush proclaimed October 2003 [National Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#).

Indigenous Peoples

The U.S. Government holds regular consultation sessions with representatives from tribal governments and nations related to negotiations on the Inter-American Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by leaders at the Summit of the Americas. Through the drafting of this declaration the Summit has launched a unique international consultative process with the indigenous civil society groups, tribes and nations.

In September 2002, the U.S. Government hosted the [National Summit on Emerging Tribal Economies](#) to promote economic development among native American tribes. The Summit brought tribes, government and American business together to promote reservations economies with the goal of creating 100,000 new jobs by 2004.

*Cultural
Diversity*

Each year, the United States awards the [Heritage Fellowships](#), the country's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Four of eleven awards in 2003 related to traditional arts of the hemisphere. The Fellowships bring attention to the traditional arts and underscore the importance of promoting living cultural heritage.

The U.S. Government worked with Arte Sem Fronteiras, a Sao Paulo-based NGO dedicated to promoting cultural integration in the Americas, to identify U.S. participants and resources for three symposia that took place in the hemisphere in 2003 in preparation for the [2004 Global Cultural Forum in Barcelona](#). The goal of the forums?on Culture and Peace (March 2003 in Austin, Texas); Cultural Diversity (October 2003 in Montevideo, Uruguay); and Sustainable Cities (December 2003 in Valpara?is, Chile)?is to help solidify links among countries and form common regional positions to promote cultural diversity and expression. The Quebec Summit mandated the first [Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities](#).

The U.S. Government has forged a new U.S./Mexico Cultural Connections Initiative in partnership with Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts, aimed at helping build an arts infrastructure between the two countries. In May 2002 the project partners held the first-ever binational meeting of the six U.S. Regional Arts Organization Directors with their Mexican counterparts, where participants planned a series of joint projects.

*Children
and
Youth*

The United States provides technical assistance to eradicate and prevent exploitative or hazardous child labor. The U.S. Department of Labor prepares [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#), an annual report presenting information on the nature and extent of child labor, as well as the efforts being made by governments to eliminate the worst forms. The report covers over 140 trade beneficiary countries and territories, including 31 countries and five territories in the Americas.

The United States is participating in Summit-mandated efforts to [prevent and remedy cases of international abduction](#) of minors by one of their parents. A new regional plan to address this issue was considered at the June 2003 meeting of the [Inter-American Children's Institute](#) and will be ready for approval at the 2004 OAS General Assembly.

The U.S. Government has provided \$3.8 million to help prevent and eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic. The three-year project will examine child prostitution and identify strategies for action.