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Canadian Firms Deserve High Marks for Corporate Citizenship in Americas, Hemispheric Think-Tank Says

Ottawa, September 13, 2005 – Canadian companies with operations in Latin America and the Caribbean are making significant contributions to social development, according to a survey released today by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL).

“Canadian companies are leading the way in applying Corporate Social Responsibility strategies to their operations abroad,” Eduardo del Buey, Executive Director of FOCAL told a meeting of private sector companies and international aid organizations, including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The meeting was held on the eve of a United Nations Summit on global development, in which Canada is playing a leading role.

“These companies are contributing to the UN’s ‘Millennium Development Goals’ because they understand it is important for competitive advantage,” Mr. del Buey said.

“Investing in social infrastructure and the educational capacity of the workforce makes good business sense and also enhances Canada’s presence in the region.”

The UN has established eight Millennium Development Goals, ranging from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education, to developing a global partnership for development involving the private sector.

Twelve Canadian companies with operations in Chile, Guatemala, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago participated in the survey. Eight companies with Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies reported making financial and human capital investments valued at $2.76m (CDN) in local community, economic and environmental development.

While the sample size is small, Mr. del Buey said the results are strong enough to show a pronounced trend.

“This reinforces the need to rethink traditional notions about development partners, for the results underline the critical importance of the private sector to the effectiveness of social development investments,” Mr. del Buey said.

For a complete report of the survey, go to www.focal.ca or call:
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To download a webcast of the meeting, go to:

About FOCAL:
The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is a solutions-oriented hemispheric think-tank that works to provide relevant information, analysis and practical policy recommendations for issues facing Canada in the Americas.