



“Civil Society and the November 2003 Miami Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Ministerial”

A discussion held May 21, 2003 at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on the planned Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum (ATSDF)

On May 21st, the Carnegie Endowment, the North-South Center at the University of Miami, Tulane University’s Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), the Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental (CEDA), PARTICIPA, Chile, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Argentina (FLACSO), and the International Institute for Sustainable Development hosted a public meeting

to discuss an opportunity for civil society involvement in the November 2003 Free Trade Area of the Americas Ministerial. The meeting took place at the Carnegie Endowment, Washington, DC. Participants were joined by Chris Padilla, Assistant United States Trade Representative for External Affairs.

Mr. Padilla described U.S. goals for public involvement in the FTAA Miami Ministerial. Learning from past FTAA ministerials, the United States’ objective is to organize opportunities for more interactive discussion between trade ministers, sub-minister level government officials, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. The Office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) is committed to ensuring a safe and secure environment in which to facilitate meaningful interaction with civil society at a level equal to the access afforded to the Americas Business Forum. To that end, USTR has taken the following steps:

Working with representatives from the Miami FTAA Host Committee and the North-South Center at the University of Miami, USTR has created an opportunity for civil society groups to organize workshops within the security perimeter of the ministerial. A core organizing group of non-governmental organizations from several countries throughout the Americas with experience and expertise in coordinating civil society involvement at FTAA ministerials and in the Summit of the Americas has been formed and an initiative for a *Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum, November 17-19, 2003, has been launched*. Civil society activities within this perimeter will facilitate interaction between workshop organizers, participants, and country delegates. While the United States government cannot guarantee delegation involvement in the workshops, it will encourage the FTAA parties including FTAA negotiating group chairs to attend, and wherever possible, participate.

USTR has scheduled a meeting between civil society workshop representatives and the trade ministers, tentatively set for late afternoon, November 19. The meeting will be designed for substantive discussion among the participants, as opposed to the Americas Business Forum tradition of making speeches to the ministers, and previous fora where civil society representatives have simply made one-way presentations to ministers. Furthermore, USTR will seek to use technology to ensure a broad public audience for the civil society roundtable discussion with ministers, including closed-circuit television and a video to be posted to USTR's website.

USTR will work to facilitate the participation of sub-minister level officials, including Negotiating Group chairs and Vice-Ministers during the first day of the ATSDF. The FTAA Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) (Vice-Ministerial level) will be meeting during the time of the ABF and ATSDF in advance of the Trade Ministers, whose meetings begin on November 19.

On behalf of the “core organizing groups” (listed above), Robin Rosenberg presented what the group considers to be an historically unprecedented opportunity for civil society engagement of the FTAA negotiating process. He emphasized the following points:

The ATSDF is but one of the many efforts already underway to organize civil society activities surrounding the FTAA ministerial. The most unique aspect of this opportunity is that it will take place within the security perimeter, thereby increasing the chances for interaction with government officials. The host government has committed to dedicated, meaningful dialogue between trade ministers and representatives from the ATSDF

The North-South Center has secured meeting and accommodation space in two hotels. The meeting space will hold approximately two-days of workshops, organized around 9 or 10 themes, under the title of the “Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum.”

No single organization has the resources to pay for the entire costs of the Forum. Participants will be expected to pay a small participation fee (to be determined), which will be used to defray administrative costs. Participants will be expected to pay for their own transportation, lodging, and if they serve as workshop coordinators, workshop costs. The core organizing group and network organizations will work to raise funding to defray costs, and enhance the quality of activities and participation.

Moving forward, the first objective is to solicit input from civil society groups regarding the themes that should be covered during the Forum. A list of possible themes was circulated during the meeting (attached). The list was not intended to be inclusive, but to spark a discussion among interested parties. Individuals and/or organizations also are encouraged to submit specific workshop proposals, noting proposed objectives, panelists, and whether or not they have the financial resources to cover costs associated with coordinating the workshop.

Within two weeks (by the end of the first week in June), the core organizing group will synthesize collected information and circulate it for comments. By the middle of June, organizers hope to have completed an outline of events and selected workshop coordinators. To assist USTR's planning efforts, a draft conference agenda should be circulating among FTAA parties by the end of June.

The following next steps will be taken by the organizers of the Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum (ATSDF):

This summary will be posted in English and in Spanish on the conference organizers' websites. Listserv managers are encouraged to re-circulate this information widely.

An ATSDF website will be established soon to facilitate information dissemination.

A "call for conference themes/ workshop proposals" notice will be circulated widely.

Input on the Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum should be directed to:

THE NORTH-SOUTH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI,

at nscenter@miami.edu

RE: ATSDF

See also the Miami FTAA Ministerial link on the North-South Center web site.

<http://www.miami.edu/nsc/pages/FTAA.html>

**Suggested Issues for
Americas Trade and Sustainable Development (ATSDF) Workshops**

**Trade and Public Participation
Trade and Environment
Trade and Labor
Trade and Migration
Trade and Corruption
Trade, Democracy and Human Rights
Trade, Institutional Reform and Capacity Building
Trade and Security
Trade, Gender and Indigenous Issues
Trade and Investment
Trade and Agriculture**