



## AMERICAS TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FORUM ATSDF

*A New Public Forum for the FTAA  
At the Miami Trade Ministerial – November 2003*

The ATSDF is a two-day forum being planned for the November 2003 meeting of Trade Ministers within the “security perimeter” – where informal dialogue and substantive exchanges can occur between civil society organizations and government officials working on the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). ATSDF will convene workshops, panels, roundtables and other activities within “thematic tents” for discussion of social, economic, political and practical concerns relating to trade liberalization in the Americas, and will be designed to complement and build upon existing efforts within civil society relating to the FTAA and the Miami ministerial.

At a public meeting on May 21, 2003 at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, D.C. Chris Padilla, Assistant United States Trade Representative for External Affairs, 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, panels, and other educational and outreach activities within the security perimeter of the ministerial. A core organizing and sponsoring 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.

### **Issues to be covered**

The ATSDF will be organized around input from interested parties and civil society organizations from throughout the Americas with an architecture that envisions a series of simultaneous “Thematic Tents,” under which a broad range of activities will be conducted by multiple institutional and expert participants from across the Americas.

Sessions within these Thematic Tents will be held over the 2-day period in a range of social, political, economic and practical themes related to trade. Based on the principal issues emerging from civil society during recent years, and input received to date from interested organizations, Thematic Tent issues will (tentatively) include:

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| 1. Trade and labor                        | 2. Trade and gender issues                    |
| 3. Trade and environment                  | 4. Trade and indigenous concerns              |
| 5. Trade, public participation and access | 6. Trade and smaller economies                |
| 7. Trade, corruption and transparency     | 8. Capacity building and institutional reform |
| 9. Trade, democracy, and human rights     | 10. Investment and the FTAA                   |
| 11. Trade and migration                   | 12. Trade and agriculture                     |
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The Thematic Tents may be adjusted to encompass additional topics, or to respond to logistical or space requirements. Each will be organized and coordinated by one or more “Thematic Tent Coordinators” to provide a logical, cohesive, constructive, and substantive treatment of the theme. Within each tent, interested organizations will hold panels, roundtables, presentations, debates, and other sessions to advance the state of understanding and promote progress in addressing issues of concern relating to the FTAA. An emphasis will be made on going beyond rhetoric and advancing issues in a way that will allow constructive and meaningful input to trade negotiators and decision-makers. The results of the series of activities under each Thematic Tent will be compiled, reported and published as a principal outcome of the ATSDF.

### **Background and Opportunity**

The opportunity for direct dialogue in Miami arose from a series of discussions that began after the last FTAA ministerial in Quito in November 2002. A modest yet important step forward was realized in Quito where ministers for the first time agreed to formally receive input from non-

profit civil society groups. Moving beyond Quito, many organizations saw a need to open up an even greater public space for dialogue inside the ministerial (inside the “security perimeter”) to make public input more meaningful, interactive and organic.

In May 2003, the office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), as host government, and the local Miami committees (as meeting hosts) agreed to create a space for dialogue within the perimeter. ATSDF organizers received word of this decision in early May, and efforts are now ongoing to define subject-specific events and to reach out to networks and to NGOs throughout the region to assure broad participation. ATSDF organizers are working to build a meaningful process open to as many interested organizations as possible.

### **Interactions with Trade Ministers and Delegations**

By holding workshops and other educational activities within the “security perimeter” and accessible to governmental staff and negotiators, ATSDF has the potential to create opportunities for informal dialogue and learning throughout the two days of meetings. The ATSDF agenda and schedule will be shared with trade delegations and some specific panels and events may be designed to take advantage of informal participation by government representatives. While the USTR cannot guarantee any delegation’s involvement in the ATSDF sessions, it has offered to encourage the FTAA parties (including FTAA negotiating group chairs) to attend, and wherever possible, participate. USTR has also offered to work to facilitate the participation of sub-minister level officials, including Negotiating Group chairs and Vice-Ministers during the ATSDF.

In addition, the United States, as host government, has scheduled a 1½-2 hour meeting on November 19 to which they will invite trade Ministers to hear reports relating to the ATSDF sessions and to discuss issues addressed during the ATSDF. Efforts will be made to assure that this meeting will be broadcast on closed circuit television and on the Web.

### **Funding**

The ATSDF is a voluntary effort without dedicated funds, so participants will generally be asked to cover their own costs of preparation for, travel to and participation in the forum. A modest registration fee of US \$80 will be charged to help defray basic administrative costs (meeting space, security badges, registration processing, hotel-airport transfers, coffee breaks, copies of materials, etc.) In addition, to the greatest extent possible the ATSDF organizers are seeking funds for travel-related costs to assure broad participation from less-well-funded organizations. Organizers welcome support from donor organizations, better-financed NGOs, organizations with trade-related project funds, and others who may be able to identify, support, and fund participation by interested organizations from throughout the region.

### **Location and Lodging**

The ATSDF workshops will be held at two hotels, the Clarion and the Courtyard Marriott, inside the Miami ministerial security perimeter. The hotels are across the street from the hotel where the Americas Business Forum will be held and close to the site of the Trade Ministerial.

Participants may stay anywhere in the greater Miami area, and will be issued credentials to enter the secured area to participate in the ATSDF. A limited number of rooms will be reserved at the meeting hotels for ATSDF participants on a first-come first-served basis. In order to receive the preferred conference rate, individuals should identify themselves as participants in the Americas Trade and Sustainable Development Forum (hotel code: ATSDF).

**For further information**

Further information, along with contact names for specific thematic workshops, will be circulated soon. Workshop agendas and registration forms will be available at a later date.

To offer input on proposed workshop themes, panels and roundtables, please send inquiries to [nscenter@miami.edu](mailto:nscenter@miami.edu) and your ideas will be referred to thematic activity organizers.