

INFORMATION EXCHANGE SESSION ON THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Introduction: The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) held another Information Exchange Session with a wide range of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from across Canada on Wednesday, February 7, 2001. Marc Lortie, Personal Representative of the Prime Minister for the Summit of the Americas, chaired the meeting, along with Ambassador Peter Boehm, Canadian Ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS), Claude Carrière, Canadian Chief Negotiator, Michael Brock, Director of the Inter-American Division, and Sylvie Bédard, Civil Society Liaison. The Session was well attended (in person and by phone) with over 69 civil society representatives from various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Consumer Organizations, Trade Unions, Universities, indigenous groups and the private sector. Other Government Departments were also represented at the meeting, including the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Environment Canada, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and the Privy Council Office (PCO).

Summary: Mr. Lortie, Ambassador Boehm and Mr. Carrière provided a general overview of recent events in lead up to the Third Summit of the Americas (April 20-22) since the last Information Exchange Session in November, commented on recent dialogue with CSOs and outlined the next steps to Quebec City. The focus of this Information Exchange Session was the Second Chapter of the 2001 Plan of Action as it will be discussed at the next Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) in March. After briefing participants, the floor was open for comments and suggestions to CSOs.

Recent events: Mr. Lortie highlighted the progress achieved in developing the 2001 Action Plan and other Summit documents at the 20th and 21st SIRG meetings in Washington, D.C., November 29-30 and January 30-February 1. In terms of the Second Chapter - *Creating Prosperity*, Mr. Lortie recognized that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) agenda item was of particular interest to many CSOs. Mr. Carrière briefed participants on the FTAA process, dating back to the first phase of negotiations which successfully took place in 1999 at the Trade Ministerial in Toronto. He also noted that one of the main issues in upcoming negotiations was linked to small economies and how they can adapt to a Free Trade environment (more information is available at www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac). Mr. Lortie emphasized that Chapter Two was broader than the FTAA. Other key elements involved in *Creating Prosperity* are: economic and financial stability; Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); telecommunications; natural disaster preparedness; environment; reducing economic disparities; labour; and migration. Mr. Lortie further explained that key up-coming Ministerial-level meetings, including Environment (March, 2001), Trade (April, 2001) and Finance (April, 2001), will play a major role in shaping the Second Chapter.

Mr. Lortie referred to the Prime Minister's recent trips to the Caribbean and Washington, D.C.. At the Canada-CARICOM Summit in Jamaica, January 18-19, the Prime Minister met with all 14 Caribbean leaders to discuss the Summit of the Americas, among other issues. Mr. Lortie noted that the Prime Minister was very receptive and supportive to Caribbean Leaders' interest in considering smaller economies, especially in the context of the FTAA.

The Prime Minister made his first address to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) on February 5. Mr. Lortie observed that the key message conveyed at Permanent Council was linked to the importance of including a democratic clause in Leaders' Declaration. Ambassador Boehm

added that the OAS has demonstrated its value in strengthening democracy, especially in the context of Peru.

Civil Society: Mr. Lortie commended the Canadian Foundation for the Americas' (FOCAL) excellent work in organizing, along with Participa (based in Chile) and Esquel (based in the United States), a Civil Society Meeting in Miami, January 19-20, bringing together over 900 CSOs. FOCAL's Executive Director added that the two-day event was an opportunity for CSOs to formally submit their proposals on various summit issues, including the FTAA, gender equality and the environment, and thanked Canada for making CSOs' views available to the SIRG. Ambassador Boehm further noted that CSOs will have another opportunity to express their views and submit their suggestions at the next open meeting of the Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management (CEGCI) on February 16.

Reference was also made to the meeting of Aboriginal Leaders of the Americas in Guatemala, January 24-27. Mr. Lortie explained that Leaders met to discuss the "Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations" in relation to the Summit of the Americas and thus develop recommendations for the Third Chapter- *Realizing Human Potential* for discussion in Quebec City. In addition to Mr. Lortie's comments, a representative from the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) explained that the principal objective behind Guatemala's meeting was the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the decision making process at the OAS. Reference was also made to the Summit of Aboriginal Leaders which will be held in Ottawa, March 29-31.

Next Steps: Mr. Lortie outlined the agenda for the next 10 weeks before the 2001 Summit. Two additional meetings will take place prior to the Third Summit of the Americas: the 22nd SIRG meeting (Barbados, March 6-9); and the 23rd (Plenipotentiary) SIRG meeting (Quebec City, April 16-17).

Comments and Questions from Civil Society:

Rights and Democracy: *Concerned that not all of Canada's negotiating positions are available on the Web site i.e. the chapter on Intellectual Property Rights?* Mr. Carrière explained that Canada has made public its positions on all issues as well as its negotiating proposals. No Canadian proposals have been tabled on some issues (i.e. environment, services). Additional information and updates on the progress of the negotiations will be posted to the Trade Negotiations and Agreements website at www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/ftaal-e.asp.

Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL): *Concerned about the proposal to accelerate the FTAA process to 2003. Could this jeopardize the work achieved thus far?* Mr. Carrière explained that this was a proposal made by Chile in an effort to outline a clearer agenda for the FTAA: conclude discussion by 2003; sign agreement by 2004; and begin implementation by 2005. He noted that no consensus on this issue has been reached.

Groupe de recherche sur l'intégration continentale: *Concerned that the Bush administration wants to accelerate the FTAA process to 2002 or even to the Summit in April, 2001. Mr. Carrière has not seen any official documents with that request.*

Conference Board of Canada/FOCAL: *Is CSR in Chapter 2? Is it tied to the FTAA? Not particular about where it might be mentioned but wanted to ensure that CSR was being addressed somewhere in the 2001 Action Plan. Mr. Lortie informed that CSR is an item that is being addressed in the Plan of Action.*

Symposium hémisphérique sur le commerce et l'environnement/Biodiversity Journal: *Urged that the FTAA and the Biodiversity Convention Law should be seen as parallel.*

Ocean Voice International/Biodiversity Journal: *Observed that environment and trade policies have been dealt with separately. Asked if there were any measures being taken to ensure that trade and environment policies can be developed together. Mr. Lortie agreed that limited progress has been made in terms of environment cooperation since the Bolivia Summit in 1996. He explained that Canada has taken some leadership in bringing environment issues back to the table by organizing the next Environment Ministerial in Montreal.*

National Council of Women: *Concerned that acceleration of the FTAA could jeopardize gender issues. How is the issue of gender mainstreaming being addressed in the FTAA process? Mr. Carrière said the FTAA did not address the issues directly. Ambassador Boehm assured that gender issues were being addressed in the Summit context. Ambassador Boehm also noted the importance of the OAS' Inter-American Commission of Women's (CIM) Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality, a program that promotes gender mainstreaming throughout the Inter-American System.*

FOCAL: *Noted that Environment Ministers have a weak role in Cabinet -- especially in smaller countries. Suggested that Canada could take a leadership role and offer experience in capacity building. Ambassador Boehm was receptive to FOCAL's suggestion and referred to the OAS' Inter-American Strategy for Sustainable Development (ISD).*

Transparency International: *Concerned that the issue of corruption is undermined in the Summit Process. Noted that there was no mention of the word "corruption" in the Themes Paper. Urged that the "c" word be given greater prominence in public Summit Documents since, in laymen terms, the "c" word is most effective. Mr. Lortie explained it is an important agenda item in the 2001 Action Plan. Ambassador Boehm added that a great deal of progress has been made in this area. Anti-corruption initiatives will be cited in Chapter One.*

Canadian Federation of Students: *Considering the UN Convention on Free Education, clarification was sought on the role of Connectivity in relation to the Summit. It was noted that on-line education encourages individuals to work in isolation as oppose to "connecting" them. Mr. Lortie explained*

that on-line education addresses developing countries' concerns regarding the growing digital divide. On-line education is one way to prepare future generations (especially in countries such as Colombia and Barbados) to enter a knowledge based economy. He also noted that Connectivity involves more than just on-line education.

Metis National Council: *Noted that no reference on indigenous peoples is evident in the Themes Paper. Advised that the AFNs does not address all of indigenous peoples concerns.*

Inuit Circumpolar Conference: *Informed that AFN does not represent Inuit interest and that they were not invited to participate in the Guatemala meeting. Concerned that Inuit interest will be left out of the Summit process. Asked Canada to focus on Inuit economies, especially in the context of the FTAA.*

FOCAL: *Referring to the Prime Minister's speech to the OAS, inquired on how Canada will ensure openness and transparency. Mr. Lortie noted that the public was being kept informed on a regular basis through media and on-going dialogue with CSOs. More than 22 press conferences have been held on the Summit of the Americas. Canada intends to continue briefing CSOs on Government activities and continue receiving their views.*

Canadian Federation of Students: *Concerned the Summit security perimeter would impede access by the independent media. Mr. Lortie explained that precautions were necessary in view precedents set at events such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle. He suggested that transparency concerns are a non-issue since professional media sources who have obtained accreditation will have access to the press facilities.*