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Page 1 of 1

From: Michelle Wachsmann fin.emljl@int
To: eclac@tmn.com
Date: Wednesday, March 31, 1999 3:39 PM
Subject: Comments regarding the FTAA

Dear Sirs:

In conformance with the open invitation that the Committee of Governmental Representatives issued regarding the Participation of the Civil Society, we are sending you attached hereto a document containing our comments regarding the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and its respective executive summary.

Please do not hesitate to contact us in the event that you should need any additional information on our part.

Sincerely,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is necessary to guarantee the successful entry of small economies in the process of hemispheric integration with a view towards safeguarding their viability. The negotiating process should be as transparent as possible, always taking into account differences with respect to the level of development and size of the economies of the Americas, for the purpose of generating opportunities for the full participation of all countries, including the smallest economies.

To stimulate economic growth and development of the infrastructure of the nations of the Hemisphere, we support the negotiating of different timetables of trade liberalization, which should be structured taking into account the internal realities and situations of each country.

Special attention should be paid to certain sectors which, due to their particular characteristics, need to have different paces of 'dis-encumbrance.' Likewise, it is necessary to consider the treatment to be given to those products with respect to which the World Trade Organization (WTO) does not stipulate any regulation, thus letting each country establish its own international trade policy.

It is necessary to obtain specific commitments from the Governments that they will not increase existing tariffs or impose new ones.

The Governments should commit themselves to eliminating existing non-tariff barriers and not imposing new ones, agreeing on a time period for their elimination prior to the start of tariff 'dis-encumbrance,' such that it permits adaptation to the new conditions.

The process of definition of the rules of origin should be concomitant with that of negotiation of the timetables of tariff 'dis-encumbrance.' The rules should be clear, coherent, easily applicable and should not create restraints on trade.

To define the rules of origin, it would be appropriate to consider the existing agreements in the Hemisphere with a view towards harmonizing them. Same should be in line with the Agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Efforts should be made to create a harmonized tariff nomenclature.

The negotiating process should set forth short- and long-term solutions to the structural problems of Customs and ports of the Hemisphere.

The private sectors lack information about the work and progress achieved until this time by the different Negotiation Groups of the FTAA. The real power of a free trade area will only be understood when the actors involved have a common awareness of its objectives and direction.

A mechanism should be developed that permits the real, direct and active participation of the private sector in the negotiations. No official position on a specific issue can be established without previously consulting with the sectors involved.

It is necessary that the negotiators make public knowledge reports containing the issues discussed, conclusions agreed on and lists of future actions.