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Sistema Económico
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Système Economique
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Final Report of the XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean

*XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors of Latin America and the Caribbean
Mexico City, Mexico
9 and 10 December 2008
SP/XIX-RDCIALC/IF-08*

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RAPPOREUR'S REPORT

1. The XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in the headquarters of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, in Mexico City, on 9 and 10 December 2008. The central topic of the meeting was International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

2. Participants in the meeting included delegations of the following Member States: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and the following international organizations: the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (WB), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the European Commission (EC), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB), and the Permanent Secretariat of SELA. The List of Participants is included in Annex VII.

3. During the opening session, welcome speeches underscoring the importance of the event were delivered by the following personalities:

a. Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), stressed that CAF's mission is to support sustainable development and regional integration, saying that it is precisely in this connection that the central topic of the meeting is related to CAF's mission. This topic is associated with a reduction in transaction costs which can help our economies to achieve a more effective insertion into the international economy and a better regional integration. The objective is to accomplish regional and international integration so as to generate economic growth and, consequently, social wellbeing.

Thus, CAF welcomed the central topic of the meeting – trade facilitation – in view of its importance for the global agenda and the trade negotiations agenda. Duque stressed that this was the only one of the Singapore issues that was included in the multilateral agenda of Doha, with the mandate of not only making clarifications as regards this issue in the GATT texts, but also of working on it simultaneously with cooperation-related issues. He pointed out that trade facilitation is also a priority issue on the international cooperation agenda, both within the WTO initiative on aid for trade and in the regional and international agreements. In concluding his speech, Duque reiterated CAF's support to trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean and to SELA.

b. Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), warmly welcomed participants on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Ambassador José Rivera Banuet, highlighting the importance of the issue of trade facilitation and aid for trade to promote development and integration of the region. Romero expressed SELA's most sincere gratitude to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Andean Development Corporation, and the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information, for their support in organizing and holding this regional meeting.

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In his speech, Romero underscored the importance of trade for developing countries, particularly for Latin American and Caribbean nations. International trade has, therefore, a decisive impact on economic growth and development. He stressed that many of the cooperation programmes on aid for trade and trade facilitation – which are only a fraction of Official Development Assistance – could be seriously undermined by the magnitude and complexity of the international economic crisis that has been affecting all countries, and has been particularly evidenced in the financial sector over the last few months. He said that this will surely divert some resources from international cooperation which may be redirected to mitigate the immediate effects of the crisis, which could affect the allocation of resources aimed at trade promotion as a tool to support growth and reduce poverty. Within this context, it is necessary for Latin America and the Caribbean to agree on common positions and outline cooperation and coordination mechanisms that allow the region's countries to take the greatest possible advantage from development assistance, particularly from aid for trade and trade facilitation programmes.

In this connection, he said that SELA's Work Programme for 2009 is aimed at supporting Latin American and Caribbean cooperation and integration, and some of its activities are specifically linked to the issue of trade facilitation, such as the conduction of a comprehensive study on the digitalization of foreign trade procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean; the organization of a Seminar-Workshop on cooperation in the area of transport in order to strengthen regional integration and trade facilitation; and the implementation of the Regional Programme on Cooperation for Trade Promotion and Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean (2009-2011).

c. Luz María de la Mora, Head of the Unit for Economic Relations and International Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Government of Mexico and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, warmly welcomed participants, and expressed her satisfaction to host this meeting organized by SELA in the headquarters of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. In her speech, she said that in view of the financial crisis affecting the region, it is necessary to find a mechanism that allow us to ensure continued progress for our peoples amid adverse circumstances. And such mechanism is well known and shared by all of the region's countries: international cooperation for development. In this connection, she considered that this meeting, organized by SELA, will allow for defining actions and strategies so that the region can take advantage of a trade facilitation policy with the following objectives:

- Developing countries – particularly relatively less developed countries – should use trade as an efficient mechanism to promote growth and employment, reduce poverty, and accomplish their development goals.
- In addition, such policy should allow us to analyze how to facilitate access to international markets for developing countries, by helping them to build on and modernize their trade capacities.
- It should help to support regional integration, as well as the region's integration into the global trade system.

In this connection, she said that SELA has an ideal position to support the creation of programmes that allow for growth of trade facilitation.

De la Mora made a proposal to create an “*Exporters Desk for Developing Countries*”. Such a “Desk” should be an *online* tool on exports, which should operate as a free, comprehensive source available to enterprises and exporters in the countries of the region, so as to help them export their goods to preferential markets, such as the United States or the EU. Similarly, she suggested SELA to create an Enterprise Development Centre, which could provide support in the application of strategies to develop the private sector in the region, by offering non-financial services to companies and enterprises in those countries, and support joint initiatives of the most important economic operators for that purpose, such as the United States and the European Union. In addition, she proposed to work – jointly with SELA – in the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean Fund for Development, an instrument which could serve to support cooperation and development assistance. Such Fund would be financed by all of the Member States of SELA, would operate in accordance with its own rules, and would be managed by a fully accountable committee.

Finally, she expressed her conviction that trade facilitation can be a powerful tool for development. If it is duly directed and managed, in a progressive way, along with development assistance, it can become an engine for growth to promote generation of jobs and contribute to eradicate poverty.

A. DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES

4. The meeting adopted the Work Agenda included in Annex I. This report, the documents, and the presentations delivered during the meeting are available on SELA’s Web page: www.sela.org.

5. The moderator of the Introductory Session, “International cooperation for trade facilitation: International and regional perspectives”, was Mr. Máximo Romero, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. This session included two major presentations, which served as introduction and dealt with concepts and proposals, as detailed below:

6. Mr. Frans Lammersen, Principal Administrator of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), made a presentation on the document “More and Better Aid for Trade” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di N° 3-08). In his presentation, he recalled that the various multilateral trade negotiations have emphasized the difficulties faced by many low-income countries to adjust themselves to trade liberalization and take advantage of new market access opportunities. Lammersen pointed out that in those countries, the governments, institutions and enterprises lack capacities – i.e. information, policies, procedures and infrastructure – to effectively compete in international markets and to benefit from the advantages offered by international trade. For some countries, this situation is compounded by the possibility that greater multilateral trade liberalization may undermine the value of their trade preferences with respect to markets such as those of the European Union or the United States.

In this regard, Lammersen stressed that the first Global Aid for Trade Review, held in November 2007, established that donor agencies and partner countries are both prioritizing trade in their development strategies and that the corresponding aid flows are also increasing. He said that in 2006, US\$ 23 billion in aid was provided to activities that are closely associated with improving trade capacity, e.g. trade policies and regulations, productive capacity building and economic infrastructure. On that basis, the prospects for additional aid for trade resources looked promising. However, he said, much has

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changed and today the world is confronted with a severe economic crisis. The impact of the financial crisis on the real economy, together with volatile commodity prices and the failure to conclude the Doha Development Agenda risk jeopardizing the contribution of trade to economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries.

In this connection, he pointed out that a shortfall in trade finance and other financial flows to developing countries now seems likely, and the demand for the commodities on which much of their recent growth was based is projected to decline. Together with their dependency on tariff revenues, these developments will render budgets vulnerable to potential reductions in trade flows. In this less hospitable environment, aid for trade is even more critical to harness the supply side response of low-income countries.

The OECD document is structured as follows. The first section describes the scope of aid for trade. Sections 2 and 3 argue why and how aid for trade matters for pro-poor growth. Section 4 addresses some challenges in delivering to aid for trade. Section 5 sketches the aid for trade monitoring framework, while section 6 highlights the results of the First Aid for Trade Global Review. Section 7 presents the latest aid for trade data. Finally, Section 8 concludes by outlining some of the key aid for trade challenges in the years to come.

Lammersen noted that the study concludes by stating that the aid for trade initiative has been a success in galvanizing political support and additional financial resources. However, the world financial crisis, and the failure to conclude the Doha Development Agenda have together distinctly worsened the outlook. Maintaining the momentum requires more than ever the explicit prioritization of trade-related needs in the dialogue between donors and partners about national development strategies. The November 2008 OECD Policy Dialogue on Aid for Trade highlighted three key challenges that need to be confronted in order to ensure that the initiative continues to receive the priority attention it deserves. These are: strengthening the arguments; improving the delivery; and providing the right feedback.

7. Esperanza Durán, Executive Director of the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information (AITCI), presented the document "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a Regional Programme" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/DT N° 2-08). In her presentation, Durán underscored that there is broad recognition of the potential benefits that can be obtained by developing and improving trade facilitation. According to OECD estimates, the minimum cost of trade transactions – 2 percent of the value of traded goods – allows for inferring that nearly US\$ 3 billion are invested globally to mobilize goods through ports and across borders. In this connection, she said that some small improvements could bring about substantial benefits: the OECD estimates that a 1 percent reduction in global trade transactions would generate gains in terms of general wellbeing equivalent to US\$ 40 billion, and non-OECD countries would get two-thirds of the benefits. Since it would be relatively easy to achieve reductions well above one percent, she said that these figures indicate that an agreement on trade facilitation within the framework of the World Trade Organization would be more favourable than all the benefits that could be obtained in the remaining negotiation areas that may emerge as part of the Doha Work Programme.

Ms. Durán pointed out that even if no successful conclusion is reached in the Doha Round in the near future, the negotiations and agreements conducted and signed thus far have already given fresh impetus to the initiatives on trade facilitation – particularly in developing countries. They have also generated a gigantic leap in the levels of technical assistance and support to capacity building aimed at the reforms related to trade

facilitation and development of the corresponding infrastructure. She stressed, however, that Latin America and the Caribbean has received a disproportionately small amount of the total global resources destined to aid for trade. During the period 2001-2006, the region received the amount of US\$ 47.3 million – less than 4 percent of the total – with over 60 percent coming from bilateral donors, particularly the United States.

In this connection, she believes that this situation highlights the need to undertake customs reforms, create institutions and invest in new technologies and infrastructure related with trade and transport. With a few exceptions, the countries of the region are positioned in the lower half of the lists concerning the suitable conditions for conducting commercial transactions, particularly, as far as the costs related to handling of goods and customs dispatches are concerned. This leads to losses in competitiveness for regional exports in international markets.

Ms. Durán said that, even though there are numerous tools and programmes available to undertake reforms in the area of trade facilitation, the multilateral institutions often regret the fact that national high-level political commitment is insufficient to ensure sustainable and significant reforms. She also made emphasis on the lack of credible and systematic strategic planning to generate benefits for the whole value chain through trade facilitation initiatives. In short, she concluded that financial assistance is adequate, but there are not sufficient projects; and that in practice, most of the countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region somehow participate in trade facilitation projects – sometimes at the subregional level – which are supported in various ways by regional and multilateral financial institutions, as well as bilateral donors. Similarly, the ambitious collective objectives as regards trade facilitation, in general, and the customs reform, in particular, have been foreseen in various trade agreements, including those signed with the United States and the European Union.

Nevertheless, she stressed that there are considerations in favour of a broad regional initiative; particularly with the purpose of generating a political commitment so as to carry out the reform in the area of trade facilitation in a sustainable way. In this regard, Ms. Durán pointed out that regional support for the adoption of international standards – for instance, on customs procedures and electronic data transmission – would bring about substantial benefits at a very low cost; and therefore it would be convenient to assess the possibility to adopt a regional approach to establish one-stop shops for customs procedures. The participation of all interested parties at the regional level, particularly the private sector, could serve as an effective mechanism to achieve the goals of trade facilitation.

Lastly, Ms. Durán said that the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) might serve as a model. Even though it has no legal framework at all and a limited central budget, this forum for cooperation has used trade facilitation as an area where goals and principles can be established, and an assumption can be made that each government will comply with them on the basis of their good will and its own interests. At the same time, the mere fact that APEC has such objectives has attracted a great deal of support by donor countries with the purpose of contributing to accomplishing them.

In this connection, Ms. Durán said priority should be given to regional cooperation through consensus-based strategies for trade facilitation, subject to both self-financed programmes and those financed by donor countries.

8. Participants in Session I, on “International Cooperation for trade facilitation from the international perspective”, included representatives of the Organization for Economic

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Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Bank (WB) and the European Commission (EC). Mr. Máximo Romero, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, was the moderator for Session I, introducing each one of the speakers.

9. Representing the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Mr. Anthony Kleitz, Senior Trade Counsellor of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate, made a presentation titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation: A Perspective from the OECD" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 7-08), (available only in English). In his presentation, Kleitz underscored the benefits that could result from trade facilitation for the various national and international actors, in both the public and private sectors, in terms of the encouragement and income that could be generated by the dynamics of international trade. He also made emphasis on the reforms that should be implemented within each one of the countries to take advantage of such benefits, as well as the changes that should take place within the framework of international cooperation.

10. Afterwards, Mr. Eric Álvarez, Head of the Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the International Trade Centre (ITC), made a presentation titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation: International Perspective" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 8-08), explaining the objectives, mission, programmes and aid for trade initiatives of the International Trade Centre, as well as the concept of trade facilitation from the perspective of the WTO and the UN-CEFACT. Álvarez also dealt with the changes and the consequences seen in the wake of the September 11 attacks against the U.S., as well as the new standards and regulations which have imposed further restrictions on trade instead of facilitating it. By way of example, he referred to the situation of the Law on Health, Preparation and Response to Bioterrorism, and how these regulations have an impact on trade of fruit, vegetables and pharmaceutical products. Álvarez also underscored the importance of the private sector in developing countries and its need to use and improve the tools offered by trade facilitation; to this end, it is necessary to count on close collaboration between the private and public sectors. As part of the analysis and recommendations for collaboration between the private and public sectors, Álvarez made emphasis on the importance of training and capacity building for the private sector so as to gain knowledge about regulations; as well as training and capacity building for the public sector so that it can better understand the needs of the private sector. He also stressed it is convenient to hold seminars in order to exchange successful experiences and organize a public-private platform for dialogue so as to discuss priority issues. He said that partnerships play a key role in providing services to its members, such as one-stop shops, and recommended to invest in infrastructure and systems (information technologies) in order to facilitate trade.

11. Allen Bruford, Deputy Director of Facilitation and Procedures of the World Customs Organization (WCO), made a presentation titled "Enhancing Growth and Development through Securing and Facilitating Trade" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 4-08), (available only in English). In his presentation, Bruford made a general introduction on the objectives, structure, and areas of work of the WCO, as well as its programmes and strategies. He also referred to the international agreements and regulations providing guidelines to the WCO for conducting its activities. Finally, he stressed that the issues of trade facilitation and customs modernization are closely related to the countries' national security. He stressed that the various technical and capacity programmes offered by the WCO within the framework of its cooperation agreements with LAC are available to all participating States.

12. Representing the World Bank, Eduardo Urdapilleta, Specialist in Private Sector Development, International Trade Facilitation and Competitiveness, made a presentation titled "A Vision of Competitiveness and Foreign Trade Facilitation" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 9-08). In his presentation, Urdapilleta highlighted the importance of the issue of trade facilitation for Latin American and Caribbean countries, saying that competitiveness levels in most of the region's countries are below their levels of relative development, even though some of them have been able to take advantage of their commercial relations with Asia. Urdapilleta also made some comparisons between productivity and logistics costs between LAC and OECD countries. He explained that from the perspective of World Bank there are at least three areas in which operations could be carried out in order to improve competitiveness and trade facilitation: i) infrastructure, transport and services, ii) entrepreneurial development, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises, and iii) support and facilitation services. Referring to possible support mechanisms by the World Bank, Urdapilleta said that they could be aimed at supporting public policy making and implementation in the areas of competitiveness and trade facilitation, particularly technical assistance loans, financial support for sectoral studies and specific issues, advisory agreements, and assessments of conditions for investment, among others.

13. Michelangelo Margherita, First Secretary of Economic Affairs and Trade of the European Commission (EC), delivered a presentation titled "Cooperation for Trade Facilitation: European Union Perspective" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 10-08), (available only in English). In his presentation, Margherita dealt with the concept of aid for trade, as well as the objectives and financial commitments of the European Union as regards issues related to trade assistance, specifically aid for trade and its geographical distribution. He also referred to the levels of intervention of the European Union to support trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean at the regional and national levels. From the regional perspective, Margherita mentioned the programmes being developed by the EU in Central America, the Andean Community and MERCOSUR; and at the national level he referred to the programmes and initiatives undertaken in Mexico, Chile and Ecuador.

14. The moderator made a summary of the main aspects of the presentations, including: the international recognition that Latin America and the Caribbean is the most backwarded region which benefits the least from aid for trade; the importance of orienting South-South Cooperation towards the objectives of trade facilitation; the fact that aid for trade flows could be affected by the current global financial crisis, bearing in mind the need to increase such flows in the future and to develop cooperation and exchanges among national agencies receiving aid for trade. The moderator also highlighted the principles of the Paris Declaration on the Efficiency of Development Assistance and the Accra Agenda for Action, which establish commitments as regards efficiency of aid in general, not only for traditional and new donors, but also for recipients and for international organizations; as well as the need to enhance national capacities to take better advantage of international cooperation.

Afterwards, the moderator thanked speakers for their presentations and invited the delegations to express their views in this connection.

15. The representative of FLACSO underscored the convenience for Latin American and Caribbean countries to develop policies aimed at increasing production for both intra-regional and extra-regional exports, which, in her opinion, should lead to the creation of productive employment.

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16. The representative of the Meso-America Project made a brief presentation on the achievements accomplished within the framework of cooperation among Mexico, Central America and Colombia for trade facilitation. In this connection, he considered coordination among the various economic projects to be indispensable in order to take advantage of synergies.

17. The delegation of the Dominican Republic highlighted the great dispersion existing as regards aid for trade, underscoring that medium-income countries are little benefited by such aid. The delegation also emphasized the need to harmonize the different policies followed by international organizations in this area, in view of the high level of dispersion seen in cooperation initiatives on aid for trade and trade facilitation among a great variety of organizations. In this connection, the delegation considered that an important task that should be undertaken is to coordinate such projects and efforts in accordance with the strategies and interests of each one of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. Similarly, the delegation recommended greater coordination among national authorities receiving aid for trade in order to take full advantage of it.

18. The delegation of Brazil said it was convenient to reiterate – as its government did during the latest meeting of the WTO Negotiating Group on Trade Facilitation – that the resources destined to aid for trade are insufficient, and requested this meeting to endorse this statement.

19. The speakers answered some of the questions made by the delegations, particularly those referred to the insufficiency of aid for trade; the need to increase the exchange of information about aid for trade; the rejection of the conditions imposed to receive technical assistance; the need to develop strategies and build capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to increase efficiency of received aid, and to encourage greater coordination among donor international institutions.

20. Participants in Session II, on “International cooperation for trade facilitation from the Latin American and Caribbean perspective”, included representatives of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Meso-America Integration and Development Project, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), was the moderator for Session II, introducing each one of the speakers.

21. The first presentation was delivered by Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF). It was titled “CAF and the Strengthening of Trade Capacities in the Region” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 11-08). In his presentation, Duque made a general assessment of trade at the global level and within LAC, saying that even though regional trade is still growing, it has lost importance at the global level due to the persistence of substantial barriers to trade. After making a brief summary of the objectives, mission and structure of CAF, Duque referred to CAF’s portfolio by economic sectors and its cooperation funds, making special emphasis on the Programme to Support the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), the Programme to Support Border Development and Integration (PADIF), the Programme to Support Competitiveness (PAC) and the Programme to Support Better International Insertion.

22. As part of his considerations as regards the central topic of the meeting, Duque referred to the relevance of strengthening trade capacities, particularly trade facilitation for Latin America and the Caribbean. All of this, he said, should be based on the identification and prioritization of strengthening trade capacities, internal coordination and articulation of the various general development plans. Finally, Duque stressed that within the framework of CAF there are various strategic support programmes available to the countries, which can contribute to regional integration to different degrees.

23. Juan Bosco Martí Ascencio, General Coordinator of the Meso-America Integration and Development Project, delivered a presentation titled "Meso-America Integration and Development Project" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 12-08), describing the objectives and general characteristics of the Project, as well as its action strategies in the social area (public health, territorial information, development of low-cost housing and environmental sustainability) and the economic area (road infrastructure, power interconnection, integration of telecommunications, customs modernization and border crossings, and regulatory harmonization). Similarly, Martí Ascencio dealt with the projects being devised as regards the Meso-American railway system, short-distance maritime transport, the Meso-American biofuel programme, and the project on Meso-American competitiveness indicators. Afterwards, he analyzed the achievements made by the Meso-American Project in the area of modernization of border crossings and trade facilitation, based on the example of the pilot plans being undertaken by El Salvador-Honduras and Mexico-Guatemala.

24. Pablo Illarietti, Consultant in the issues of Trade Facilitation and Customs of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), made a presentation titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 13-08), which was aimed at considering the issue of trade facilitation and the main events and regulations which have had an influence on its evolution within the international context. Illarietti went on to analyze the regulatory framework being used by the WCO and the new vision of customs activities. Afterwards, he described the various projects being promoted by the IDB at the national, bi-national and regional levels to support trade facilitation and security of trade activities, as well as research activities and the relevance of best practices in the region in this area.

25. The presentation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was delivered by Jorge Máttar, Officer in Charge of ECLAC'S Subregional Office in Mexico. In his presentation, Máttar described the approach followed by ECLAC in dealing with this issue, focused on three activities, namely: to study the technical characteristics of trade facilitation, the dissemination of information about its benefits for SMEs, and the effects of the negotiation on FTAs which include commitments and disciplines concerning trade facilitation. In this connection, the efforts made by ECLAC have been aimed at collaborating with the countries and at supporting SMEs insertion into the international markets, for which the specific activities have focused on creating a network of specialists, disseminating information about the existing instruments and regulations and informing about the results of the WTO negotiations. With respect to SMEs, ECLAC's main activities have centred on disseminating information about best practices and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Máttar also informed that the United Nations has created the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Commerce, as a tool at the service of Latin American and Caribbean countries to simplify trade procedures and eliminate obstacles to trade. In addition, studies have been conducted about the procedures affecting the transport of goods since they are considered to be one of the major obstacles to trade, with a strong

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impact on transaction costs. In concluding his presentation, Máttar underscored the need to achieve greater regional coordination in view of the vast diversity of ideas regarding this issue, to strengthen South-South Cooperation, to resort to regional cooperation vis-à-vis the scarcity of resources, and to improve the conditions for competition.

26. Kai Bethke, Representative and Head of the Regional Office of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Mexico, delivered the presentations “Concept of a Project. An Alternative for Regional Cooperation for Latin America and the Caribbean: UNIDO’s Bank of Industrial Knowledge (UNIDO-BCI)” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 13-08) and “UNIDO’s Bank of Industrial Knowledge” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 13-08/Add.1), which are initiatives aimed at creating a flexible mechanism for South-South Cooperation in the region to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices. In addition, he said, they are aimed at creating a sustainable mechanism to take advantage of the experiences and the capacities of each one of the region’s countries to find innovative and creative solutions.

27. The moderator made a summary of the main aspects of the presentations on trade facilitation, which underscored that domestic efforts and tasks are a top priority. Special emphasis was made on three areas: identification and prioritization of national plans and projects for trade facilitation; coordination among specialized agencies and institutions associated with trade facilitation; and efficient application of harmonized, internationally recognized norms and disciplines. The moderator also emphasized the need to strengthen collaboration between the private and public sectors, to promote and support SMEs, and to make strides with regional cooperation and coordination programmes, while taking into consideration other initiatives such as SELA’s Programme for Trade Facilitation. To this end, it is important to take advantage of the work and the possibilities for cooperation offered by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Commerce (UN/CEFACT) for SELA’s activities in this area, and to try to overcome the differences as regards the interpretation and application of international standards on trade facilitation.

28. The delegation of Guatemala made emphasis on the poor relation among the various international programmes to support trade facilitation, which makes it difficult to take advantage of the expected benefits. In this connection, the delegation said that it is necessary to urge international organizations to ensure greater coordination among them.

29. The delegation of Costa Rica considered it necessary to review the approach that trade facilitation should have, since it could be developed through both South-South Cooperation and triangular cooperation. In this regard, the delegation stated that triangular cooperation is an alternative that should be strengthened among Latin American and Caribbean countries in terms of aid for trade and trade facilitation.

30. The delegation of Mexico deemed it necessary for the analyses on this matter to deal with the difficulties that have prevented Latin American and Caribbean countries from obtaining better results in terms of trade, both at the regional and international levels. In this connection, the delegation considered it necessary to promote economic cooperation in the region, as well as the dissemination of information and experiences as regards international cooperation for trade facilitation and its assessment.

31. The delegation of Cuba underscored the need to promote South-South Cooperation, considering it to be more feasible in the current conditions and stating that in this regard SELA can play a fundamental role.

32. The delegation of Dominican Republic stated that in order to ensure trade facilitation it is not enough to modernize customs; it is also necessary to include other aspects related to infrastructure and capacity building so as to take full advantage of international cooperation.

33. The delegation of Grenada said that complying with the objectives proposed in the area of trade facilitation and ensuring an increase in aid for trade for the region pose great challenges for SELA.

34. The representative of SEGIB highlighted the importance of developing physical and transport infrastructure for commercial purposes. In this connection, he underscored the achievements made by Mexico and Central America in this area, which have led to a substantial increase in trade exchanges in the subregion. In this regard, SEGIB representative said that CAF and the Meso-America are faced with the crucial task of creating or improving infrastructure for transport among neighbouring countries in the future.

35. The speakers answered some of the questions made by the delegations, as follows: The representative of CAF stated that in order to ensure trade facilitation it is necessary for compliance with commitments on the part of recipient countries to complement regional actions. The representative of the Meso-America Project underscored the need for the benefits of trade to reach all walks of society and, in this regard, he described the mechanisms applied in the Meso-America Project for that purpose. The representative of the IDB deemed it necessary to modernize institutions in a sustainable way in order to quantify the impact of projects, and recommended to deal with social issues in border areas as part of the policies to strengthen trade. The representative of ECLAC pointed out that the conversion of trade into development is not automatic, but requires public policies specifically designed for such purpose. The representative of UNIDO stressed that the relation between trade and social wellbeing does not emerge automatically.

36. The moderator noted that all debates on aid for trade and trade facilitation must attach top priority to the development of productive capacities for export, so that the increase in trade can be translated into economic growth along with job generation.

37. Participants in Session III, on "International cooperation for trade facilitation: National experiences", included representatives of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Ministry of Economy of Guatemala, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, General Direction of Customs of Dominican Republic, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Peru in Mexico. Máximo Romero Jiménez, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, was the moderator for Session III. He introduced each one of the speakers and proceeded to give the floor to the representatives of the Mexican Secretariat of Economy.

38. Mexico's national experience was analyzed by four representatives of the Secretariat of Economy: i) Liliana Camacho, Deputy Director for Europe; ii) Félix Tanus, General Director for Promotion of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Mexico (PROTLCUEM); iii) Jorge Eduardo López Valdez, Director of Negotiations on Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures; and iv) Mauricio García Velasco, Director of International Trade Rules.

39. The presentation by Ms. Liliana Camacho, Deputy Director for Europe of the Secretariat of Economy of Mexico, started with a general overview of the trade facilitation initiatives foreseen in the trade agreements signed by Mexico with the United

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States and the European Union, respectively. Afterwards, she dealt with the objectives and characteristics of PROTLCUEM, its activities and the budget it has executed thus far, as well as the new cooperation actions foreseen in the second stage of this project for the period 2008-2010.

40. Félix Tanus, General Director of PROTLCUEM, delivered a presentation titled "Project for Facilitation of the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico and the European Union" (PROTLCUEM)" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 15-08) describing the background of said project and its regulatory framework, as well as the financial contributions allocated by the government of Mexico and the European Commission for implementing the activities foreseen. Tanus underscored that the general objective of PROTLCUEM is to strengthen economic, trade and business relations between Mexico and the European Union. The project envisions activities in the areas of customs, technical norms, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, investment, competition, consumer protection, intellectual property and information, by working in a coordinated way with various national institutions in Mexico.

41. Jorge Eduardo López Valdez, Director of Negotiations on Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures of the Secretariat of Economy of Mexico, delivered a presentation titled "Elements for Trade Facilitation in Mexico" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 14-08), describing the policy objectives, benefits and measures for trade facilitation of the government of Mexico and their regulatory framework, as well as the various existing advisory mechanisms that are available to support entrepreneurs. He also dealt with the initiatives on trade facilitation undertaken in collaboration with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and APEC.

42. The last presentation about the Mexican experience was delivered by Mauricio García Velasco, Director of International Trade Regulations of the Secretariat of Economy of Mexico, who described in detail the provisions and norms regulating foreign trade in the country, as well as the measures to contribute to facilitate trade in accordance with the international and regional markets.

43. The experience of Guatemala was analyzed by Enrique Gil, Director of Programmes and Projects of the Ministry of Economy of Guatemala, in a presentation titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation: The Experience of Guatemala" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 16-08). In his presentation, Gil described the objectives of the integrated foreign trade policy of his country and of the trade agreements signed by Guatemala, the trade agreements pending approval and other agreements being negotiated. Gil also highlighted the benefits that such agreements and trade facilitation could generate for the country's economy.

44. Jamaica's experience was dealt with by Ms. Alison E. Roofe, Deputy Director of the Foreign Trade Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica. In her presentation, Roofe described the negotiations on trade facilitation held by her country with its partners in order to reduce high transaction costs in the medium term. She pointed out that such negotiations have been conducted at various levels. At the multilateral level, a Self-Assessment exercise was held within the framework of the WTO, which revealed that 47 measures are being applied to facilitate trade. At the subregional level, Jamaica has participated in CARICOM's programmes and negotiations aimed at establishing the Single Market and Economy, which implies important norms for reciprocal trade facilitation among its Member States. And at the national level, the country has implemented important institutional reforms. In concluding her presentation, Ms. Roofe emphasized the need to develop regional cooperation for trade facilitation in a

coordinated and efficient way. The presentation delivered by Ms. Roofe is included in Annex V.

45. Yoni Martínez, Advisor and Director of the Training Centre of the General Direction of Customs of Dominican Republic, delivered the presentation on his country's experience. It was titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation: The Experience of Dominican Republic" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 17-08). In his presentation, he dealt with the subject of trade facilitation within the framework of the various trade agreements signed by his country, as well as the WTO mandate in this regard. Afterwards, he analyzed in detail the process of commercialization and transport of goods in his country. Finally, he made an assessment of the international cooperation received by his country for capacity building in the area of trade facilitation. In dealing with training and capacity building activities, he made special mention of the Centre of the General Direction of Customs for Training on Customs Procedures (OMA) and the Institute of Foreign Trade and Entrepreneurial Innovation (ICEI), headquartered in Dominican Republic, which count on the necessary spaces, facilities and technologies to strengthen technical capacities in the area of customs and trade.

46. The last presentation of the session on national experiences was delivered by His Excellency, Carlos Bérnizon, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru in Mexico. It was titled "International Trade Facilitation in Peru: Policies and Achievements" (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 17-08). In his presentation, he made a general assessment of trade activities in Peru and a description of the policies applied until the moment of the consolidation of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism (MINCETUR) as an agency specialized in promoting exports in the country. Afterwards, he referred to the Strategic Export Plan 2003-2013 and made special mention of two examples of very significant reforms which have had a strong impact on trade in Peru, namely: the Master Plan on Trade Facilitation and the "One-Stop Shop" for Foreign Trade.

47. The moderator thanked the Directors for their presentations and invited the delegates to express their opinions on the subject.

48. The delegation of Belize thanked for the invitation to participate in this meeting, saying it was crucially important in view of the development agenda of Latin America and the Caribbean. The delegation described the changes that have taken place in the wake of the implementation of the economic and social policies by the new government since 2008, which have been characterized by their comprehensiveness and transparency. In this connection, the delegation underscored that based on the Millennium Development Goals – in addition to the achievements as regards of trade facilitation – there has been progress in various social areas and, at present, the government is preparing the strategic guidelines for development for the new Constitutional period. In this connection, the delegation of Belize said that the country expects to increase international and regional cooperation for national development, including trade facilitation.

49. As far as international economic cooperation is concerned, the delegation of Belize informed that, at present, its government is preparing the legal framework and a series of measures to implement such cooperation domestically in a more efficient way. It also pointed out that Belize signed the Economic Partnership Agreement between CARIFORUM and the European Union, and has a permanent and close dialogue with Mexico – a friendly country which, among other things, has built a bridge in a border zone which greatly facilitates trade between the two countries. He also described relations between Belize and other countries of the region, saying they will further consolidate with

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the construction of an already planned South-South Centre. Finally, the delegation informed that the National Development Plan will include the basic and necessary elements for trade facilitation, particularly for training young entrepreneurs. For this purpose, the delegation expects to count on international cooperation and, most importantly, on the support of Latin American and Caribbean nations.

50. The delegation of Argentina referred to the importance of international assistance to apply trade facilitation measures, and described the activities of the Argentinean Fund for Financing South-South Cooperation (FOAR), which focuses on rural development and the dairy products industry. Nevertheless, the delegation stressed that Argentina is aware of the shortage of resources for greater technical cooperation. In this regard, it recommended maximizing development of triangular cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean

51. The delegation of Brazil expressed support to the concepts and suggestions made by the delegation of Argentina as regards technical assistance, the productive mechanisms to increase exports, the development of triangular cooperation and the need to expand resources destined to aid for trade.

52. The delegation of Venezuela expressed its gratitude for the invitation to this meeting and thanked speakers for their presentations. It underscored that in Venezuela many of the aspects related to trade facilitation are based on the strength and modernization of customs, mainly because a very interesting reform has been undertaken over the past 10 years in the area of infrastructure for Information and Communication Technologies. Nevertheless, the delegation pointed out that problems in the logistics chain – e.g. certifications of operators – have become a major hurdle for trade facilitation.

53. The delegation of Ecuador thanked speakers for their presentations, saying they are very useful for the work being carried out in the country. The delegation made special mention of the need to avoid considering trade facilitation in a very strict sense, since it would be dangerous to consider it merely as a series of administrative and procedural reforms that allow only a few persons or enterprises to benefit from the conditions of international markets, leaving aside large sectors of the population which are not going to benefit from those measures. The delegation considered that if a regional trade facilitation programme is to be undertaken by SELA, more emphasis should be made on technical assistance and the exchange of best practices – not only as regards administrative issues, which are important *per se*, but also as regards the ways to link such trade facilitation to sectors which have been traditionally unable to participate in trade. In short, a broader vision of trade facilitation should be promoted, and this is a recommendation that the government of Ecuador makes to SELA and the participants in the meeting, which in case it is adopted, could generate greater benefits for the whole population.

54. The moderator pointed out that trade facilitation should not be underestimated, because it is a unique tool that can be used to comply with the Millennium Development Goals.

55. The delegation of Mexico deemed it necessary to improve capacities for technical cooperation among the countries of the region in order to generate more trade and, most importantly, to include SMEs in trade exchanges among our nations. In this connection, the delegation deemed it necessary to link trade facilitation with the SELA-IBERPME Programme.

56. The delegation of Guatemala recommended to create mechanisms to improve access to trade facilitation and information on the subject.

57. The delegation of Dominican Republic stressed that there are possibilities in Latin America and the Caribbean to offer technical cooperation to smaller countries in order to transform small producers into exporters.

58. The moderator made emphasis on SELA's merit in choosing trade facilitation as the central topic of this meeting – an issue which had not been raised by any other regional organization thus far – and underscored the role that the organization can play as facilitator, as part of a regional strategy to implement trade facilitation.

59. The representative of SEGIB suggested to take into consideration the Bariloche Agreement, which established norms for technical cooperation in the region and underscored the importance of SELA's Programme for Trade Facilitation and the SELA-IBERPyme Programme. In this connection, he underscored the need to help SELA to comply with such mandate.

60. The Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of SELA took the floor to describe the functions of SELA and the mandates it has received in the area of regional coordination and consultation, which is indispensable in view of the variety of existing forums. He made emphasis on the links between trade facilitation and the SELA-IBERPyme Programme, as well as South-South Cooperation in order to increase trade. He also underscored that the mandates of the Member States of SELA to support cooperation and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean include specific activities on trade facilitation to promote social development, such as a comprehensive study on digitalization of foreign trade procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean; the conduction of a seminar-workshop on cooperation in the area of transport to strengthen regional integration and facilitate trade; and the implementation of a Regional Cooperation Programme for Promotion and Facilitation of Trade in Latin America and the Caribbean (2009-2011). This is precisely the reason why trade facilitation was chosen as the central topic of this meeting.

In his presentation, the Director pointed out that all the views expressed by the delegates during these two days of debates will be included in the final report that will be forwarded within one week to the capital cities of the Member States of SELA. The report will also include the presentations and speeches in their corresponding annexes. Based on this report, and on the conclusions and recommendations approved in the meeting in consultation with the Member States and the organizations with competence in this area, the specific contents of each one of the activities to be included in the Trade Facilitation Programme will be defined, and in this connection the Permanent Secretariat guarantees that all the concerns as regards the social impact of the whole mechanism pursued by trade facilitation and the enhancement of trade links between Latin America and the Caribbean and the rest of the world will be taken into account.

61. The delegation of Mexico expressed its government's support to the SELA-IBERPyme Programme and announced a contribution of US\$ 50,000 in order to expand its activities.

62. After concluding their debates, the delegates of the Member States adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors of Latin America and the Caribbean, whose central topic was “International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean”, was held on 9 and 10 December 2008, in Mexico City, Mexico.
2. This meeting, convened by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), was sponsored by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC).
3. Participants recognized the analytical quality and value of the proposals contained in the base documents for discussion, titled “International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a Regional Programme” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/DT No. 1-08) and “More and Better Aid for Trade” (SP/XIX-RDCIALC/Di No. 3-08). However, the Member States of SELA still have the possibility to submit to the Permanent Secretariat additional remarks and proposals about the contents of these two documents, which will be taken into consideration in SELA’s activities regarding this issue.
4. Participants underscored the importance of the presentations delivered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the World Bank (WB), the European Commission (EC), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Meso-America Project for Integration and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as the presentations made by Argentina, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, and Peru as regards their national experiences.
5. The delegates of the Member States of SELA underscored the importance of assistance in strengthening their trade capacity, particularly as far as trade facilitation for Latin American and Caribbean countries is concerned. This must become a tool to accomplish our governments’ fundamental goal of achieving sustainable economic development with social inclusion.

Conclusions:

The most relevant issues for debate by the delegations of SELA’s Member States included the following:

- a. That aid for trade and trade facilitation are valuable tools to promote trade exchanges, which might have positive effects on national development efforts, particularly on the social policies aimed at fighting poverty. Nevertheless, both the negotiations on Trade Facilitation at the multilateral level and the existing Aid for Trade mechanisms should take into consideration the objections expressed at the WTO in this connection by some nations on behalf of small economies and relatively less developed countries.
- b. In all the debates about aid for trade and trade facilitation, it is necessary to give top priority to productive capacity building for export. Aid for trade has to ensure that the increase in exports results in economic growth. In addition, this must occur

within a context of job generation and improvements in the employment structure, in accordance with the goal set forth in Objective 1 of the Millennium Development Goals concerning poverty reduction.

- c. Dialogue and collaboration between the public and private sectors is crucial for success of trade facilitation processes. Similarly, it was emphasized that the progress made in terms of trade facilitation could be fundamental to facilitating and improving the international insertion of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- d. It is necessary for Latin America and the Caribbean to act in a coordinated way, based on consensus, in the multilateral trade negotiations – particularly as far as trade facilitation is concerned – and to take full advantage of international cooperation concerning these issues in an effort to use resources as efficiently as possible.
- e. Latin American and Caribbean countries recognize the importance of aid for trade and trade facilitation as part of Development Assistance, since they are the region that has received the least benefits and resources within the group of developing countries. In this connection, the delegation of Brazil highlighted the convenience of reiterating, as it did during the latest meeting of the WTO negotiating group on trade facilitation, that the amount of resources aimed at aid for trade has been insufficient for the region.
- f. South-South Cooperation and triangular cooperation emerge as alternatives that must be strengthened among Latin American and Caribbean countries as regards aid for trade and trade facilitation.
- g. A central element in cooperation for trade facilitation is to analyze how Latin America and the Caribbean can build and strengthen capacities that allow it to submit cooperation projects to multilateral and international organizations and donor countries, in terms of trade facilitation.
- h. It is convenient to link the principles of the Paris Declaration on the Efficiency of Development Assistance with the Accra Agenda for Action, which establishes commitments as regards efficiency of aid in general – and therefore, as regards aid for trade, specifically – not only for traditional and new donors, but also for recipients and for international organizations.
- i. There is a great dispersion of cooperation initiatives as regards aid for trade and trade facilitation among a broad variety of organizations. Each organization has its own mandates and budgets; moreover, there are some bodies related to cooperation and trade facilitation that do not have enough financial resources. An important task which should be undertaken is to start coordinating all these projects and efforts in accordance with the strategies and interests of each one of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.
- j. It is important to disseminate information and experiences as regards international cooperation modalities and mechanisms for trade facilitation, and most of all, to assess their efficiency.

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- k. With respect to trade facilitation, emphasis must also be made on those efforts and tasks conducted at the domestic level which should be given priority by the countries of the region. Particularly, three areas of attention were highlighted: i) identifying and prioritizing national plans and projects on trade facilitation; ii) ensuring internal coordination among different bodies and specialized agencies related to trade facilitation; and iii) implementing, in an efficient way, harmonized norms and disciplines with international recognition.
- l. It was also noted that, under certain circumstances, divergences as regards the interpretation and application of international norms on trade facilitation can prevent countries from reaping the benefits expected from standardized international regulations on foreign trade.
- m. Due account should be taken of the work and the possibilities for cooperation that can be provided by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) in the activities that SELA must include in the area of trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Recommendations:

1. The delegates of SELA's Member States agreed on the need to maintain a permanent analysis and follow-up of the multilateral negotiations on trade facilitation, as well as the opportunities and access to technical resources and assistance offered by international cooperation, both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In this connection, they recommended the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to assess some elements of the text of the draft agreement on trade facilitation of the WTO – which recognizes the value of regional initiatives – and to include them in its activities to support trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. The delegations took note with interest of the activities foreseen in the Work Programme of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA for the year 2009, as approved by the Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council, held from 25 to 27 November 2008, making a special recommendation to attach top priority to the conduction of the following activities: the comprehensive study on the digitalization of foreign trade procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Seminar-Workshop on cooperation in the area of transport, in order to strengthen regional integration and facilitate trade; and the start of the implementation of the Regional Programme on Cooperation for Trade Promotion and Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean (2009 - 2011).
3. As part of the aforementioned Regional Programme, the delegation of Mexico recommended to create an "Exporter Desk for developing countries", which should be a free and complete source of information available to enterprises and exporters in the countries of the region. Similarly, Mexico suggested to create an Enterprise Development Centre, as a body that could provide support in the application of private-sector development strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean. With respect to these proposals, the Permanent Secretariat should take into account the project recently proposed by the government of Ecuador to support the international insertion of its MSMEs in the East Asian region, as well as the experiences of Dominican Republic as regards Aid for Trade and Trade Facilitation, in view of its participation in the Central American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and in the Economic Partnership Agreement between CARIFORUM and the European Union.

4. For the purposes of human resources and institutional capacity building, the delegation of Dominican Republic – as a cooperation offer in the area of aid for trade and trade facilitation – has made available to all of Latin America and the Caribbean two training centres: (i) the Centre of the General Direction of Customs for Training on Customs procedures; and (ii) the Institute of Foreign Trade, which promotes training of public and private actors, including SMEs, in the areas of innovation, greater market access, competitiveness, and enterprise development, among others.

5. With respect to the Regional Programme, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA will include the proposals for concrete actions made by the representatives of the Member States during the meeting, and will start making the corresponding arrangements with bilateral and multilateral donors, in order to identify sources of financing to promote the activities foreseen in the Regional Programme, particularly those activities scheduled for the year 2009.

6. The delegations congratulated the Permanent Secretariat of SELA, the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Andean Development Corporation, and the Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation for their organizational work and their support in holding this important Regional Meeting.

7. The delegations expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Mexican authorities for their hospitality as host country of this regional meeting, and to the representatives of the Republic of Guatemala for their readiness to host the XX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean in their country during the second half of 2009.

WORK AGENDA

**XIX MEETING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DIRECTORS
FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

**“INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR TRADE FACILITATION
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN”**

9 and 10 December 2008. Mexico City, Mexico

Tuesday, 9 December 2008

Morning

9:00 – 10:00	REGISTRATION
10:00 – 10:20	OPENING SESSION Speech by Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) Speech by Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) Speech by Luz María de la Mora, Head of the Unit for Economic Relations and International Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
10:20 – 10:30	Coffee break
10:30 – 11:30	INTRODUCTORY SESSION: “International cooperation for trade facilitation: International and regional perspectives” <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “More and Better Aid for Trade”. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Frans Lammersen, Principal Administrator▪ “International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a Regional Programme”. Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information (AITCI) – Esperanza Durán, Executive Director Debate among the International Cooperation Directors of the Member States of SELA
11:30– 1:00	SESSION I: International Cooperation for trade facilitation from the international perspective Moderator / Rapporteur: Máximo Romero Jiménez, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation. Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

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- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – Anthony Kleitz, Senior Trade Counsellor. Trade and Agriculture Directorate
- International Trade Centre (ITC) – Eric Álvarez, Head of the Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. Technical Cooperation Division
- World Customs Organization (WCO) – Allen Bruford, Deputy Director of Facilitation and Procedures
- World Bank (WB) – Eduardo Urdapilleta, Specialist in Private Sector Development, International Trade Facilitation and Competitiveness
- European Commission (EC) – Michelangelo Margherita, First Secretary of Economic Affairs and Trade

1:00 – 1:30

Debate

1:30 – 2:30

Lunch in the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs

Afternoon

2:30 – 3:30

SESSION II**International cooperation for trade facilitation from the Latin American and Caribbean perspective**

Moderator / Rapporteur: Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation, SELA

- Andean Development Corporation (CAF) – Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Public and Competitiveness Policies
- Meso-America Integration and Development Project – Juan Bosco Martí Ascencio, General Coordinator
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) – Pablo Illarietti, IDB's Expert in Customs Management, Practices and Procedures
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) – Jorge Máttar, Officer in Charge of ECLAC'S Subregional Office in Mexico
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) – Kai Bethke, Representative and Head of the Regional Office in Mexico

3:30 – 3.45

Coffee break

3:45 – 5:30

Debate

5:30 – 6:00

Preliminary conclusions

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

Morning

9:00- 10:00

SESSION III

International cooperation for trade facilitation: National Experiences (International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean)

Moderator/Rapporteur: Máximo Romero Jiménez, Director General of Technical and Scientific Cooperation. Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

- Liliana Camacho, Deputy Director for Europe, Secretariat of Economy. Mexico; Félix Tanus, General Director of PROTLCUEM; Jorge Eduardo López Valdez, Director of Negotiations on Rules of Origin and Customs Procedures; Mauricio García Velasco, Director of International Trade Regulations
- Enrique Gil, Director of Programmes and Projects. Ministry of Economy. Guatemala
- Alison E. Roofe, Deputy Director. Foreign Trade Department. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Jamaica
- Yoni Martínez, Advisor and Director of the Training Centre of the General Direction of Customs of Dominican Republic
- Carlos Bérnizan, Ambassador of the Republic of Peru in Mexico

10:00 – 11:00

Debate

11:00 – 11:15

Coffee break

11:15 – 1:00

Debate. Continuation

01:00 – 2:30

Free time for lunch

Afternoon

2:30 - 3:45

SESSION IV

General debate and international cooperation actions to promote trade facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Moderator / Rapporteur: Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation, SELA

3:45 – 4:00

Coffee break

4:00 – 5:00

Debate

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5:00 - 5:45

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5:45 - 6:00

CLOSING SESSION

Speech by Máximo Romero Jiménez, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation. Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

Speech by Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)

**Speech by Gabriel Duque,
Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies
of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF)**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to present my compliments to all of you. It is a pleasure for me to participate in this meeting on behalf of the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), which is grateful for the invitation extended by the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and SELA to support this important meeting.

For those of you who are not familiar with CAF, the Andean Development Corporation is a financial institution for development, which was created by the Andean countries, but currently has 17 Member States. Its mission is to support sustainable development and regional integration. It is precisely in this connection that the central topic of this important meeting – trade facilitation – is related to CAF's mission. This topic is associated with a reduction in transaction costs which can help our economies to achieve a more effective insertion into the international economy and a better regional integration. The objective is not to accomplish international integration *per se*, but to generate economic growth and, consequently, wellbeing for our economies through such international and regional integration.

Thus, we welcome the central topic of the meeting, i.e. trade facilitation, in view of its importance for the global agenda and the trade negotiations agenda. This was the only one of the Singapore issues that was included in the multilateral agenda of Doha, with the mandate of not only making clarifications as regards this issue in the GATT texts, but also of working on it simultaneously with cooperation-related issues. Trade facilitation is also a priority issue on the international cooperation agenda, both within the WTO initiative on aid for trade and in the regional and international agreements. So this afternoon I will have the opportunity to explain to you the activities of the Andean Development Corporation; and, once again, I can only thank SELA and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico for the opportunity to sponsor this important event, which will surely be very useful for all of you.

Thank you very much.

**Speech by Antonio Romero,
Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation
of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA)**

Her Excellency, Ms. Luz María de la Mora, Chief of the Unit for Economic Relations and International Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico;

Mr. Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation;

Ms. Esperanza Durán, Executive Director of the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information;

Mr. Máximo Romero Jiménez, Director General of Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico;

Mr. Frans Lammersen, Principal Administrator of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

Distinguished Ambassadors and government representatives;

Distinguished Directors and International Cooperation Officials of the Member States of SELA;

Representatives of Regional and International Organizations;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for me to warmly welcome you on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of SELA, Ambassador José Rivera Banuet, to this Nineteenth Meeting of International Cooperation Directors of Latin America and the Caribbean which will deal with an issue of great relevance for the region: international cooperation for trade facilitation among our countries.

First of all, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Andean Development Corporation, and the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information, for their support in organizing and holding this regional meeting.

There is no doubt of the importance of trade for developing countries, particularly for Latin American and Caribbean nations. International trade has a decisive impact on economic growth and development. In turn, facilitation and promotion of trade exchanges in goods and services among our nations has a direct effect on the progress and strengthening of regional integration and cooperation. Both integration and cooperation, on the one hand, and on the other, economic growth – which can be effectively promoted by trade – are inextricably linked to national, regional and multilateral efforts to free millions of people from poverty.

Nevertheless, many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are facing obstacles that limit and restrain their trade potentials, preventing them from reaping the benefits from their active participation in international trade flows. Some of these obstacles to trade are evidenced by the lack of technical know-how, inappropriate financing to enterprises and economic and social sectors, and inefficiency of transport and communications infrastructure, among others. Such limitations can and must be faced by making strides in multilateral trade negotiations in favour of the interests of developing

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countries and through efficient mechanisms for trade promotion and facilitation within the context of regional and subregional integration and cooperation organizations, as well as programmes and initiatives for bilateral and multilateral cooperation for trade facilitation.

As we know, trade facilitation is one of the issues under negotiation within the framework of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. It is aimed at maximizing technical assistance and building capacities for trade, while fostering effective cooperation between customs officials and other competent entities as regards issues related to trade facilitation and compliance with customs procedures.

In view of the impact that aid for trade and trade facilitation have on the commercial potentials of any given country and their positive implications for poverty reduction, as of the year 2005, officials started to build consensus and reinforce the commitments assumed by bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, recipient countries, private sectors and civil society, with the fundamental purpose of promoting aid for trade and trade facilitation on a global scale.

This has led developed nations to agree to progressively increase Official Development Assistance, and to allocate a privileged portion of such assistance to support developing countries in their efforts to strengthen their trade capacities. As mentioned in the document titled "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a Regional Programme" – which is to serve as the basis for the discussions that will take place during the two days of this meeting – the commitments in aid for trade and trade facilitation announced during the period 2001-2006 reached a total amount of US\$ 1,373 million, excluding the main infrastructure projects in the areas of trade-related transport and logistics, 80% of which come from regional and multilateral institutions, and the rest from bilateral donors. However, a reason for concern is the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean have received only a small portion of that aid for trade facilitation. During the period 2001-2006, the region received barely US\$ 47.3 million, equivalent to 3.4% of the total.

Many of those cooperation programmes on aid for trade and trade facilitation – which are only a fraction of the Official Development Assistance – can be seriously undermined by the magnitude and complexity of the international economic crisis that has been affecting all countries, and has been particularly evidenced in the financial sector over the last few months. This will certainly divert some resources from international cooperation which may be redirected to mitigate the immediate effects of the crisis, which could affect the allocation of resources aimed at trade promotion as a tool to support growth and reduce poverty.

Within this context, it is necessary for Latin America and the Caribbean to agree on common positions and outline cooperation and coordination mechanisms that allow the region's countries to take the greatest possible advantages from development assistance, particularly from aid for trade and trade facilitation programmes.

In this connection, I would like to inform you that the XXXIV Regular Meeting of the Latin American Council – the highest political decision-making body of SELA – was held in the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA in Caracas, from 25 to 27 November, approving our organization's Work Programme for the year 2009.

Generally speaking, the projects and activities foreseen in SELA's Work Programme are aimed at supporting Latin American and Caribbean cooperation and integration, but special mention should be made of some of them in this forum since they are specifically

linked to the issue of trade facilitation. I am referring to the conduction of a comprehensive study on the digitalization of foreign trade procedures in Latin America and the Caribbean; the organization of a Seminar-Workshop on cooperation in the area of transport in order to strengthen regional integration and trade facilitation; and the implementation of the Regional Programme on Cooperation for Trade Promotion and Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean (2009-2011). In order to implement this important Regional Programme on Cooperation, the Permanent Secretariat of SELA has the firm intention of working jointly with its Member States, other international organizations – such as AITCI, OECD, the World Customs Organization, the European Commission, UNIDO, the World Bank and SEGIB – regional agencies – such as CAF, ECLAC and the IDB – and the subregional integration organizations.

I am sure that the debates, and particularly the conclusions and recommendations stemming from this meeting of directors and specialists in international cooperation and the issue of trade facilitation, will help us focus ourselves on the top-priority activities of the aforementioned Regional Programme on Cooperation for Trade Promotion and Facilitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I wish you the greatest success in the debates and I would like to reiterate the support and willingness of the Permanent Secretariat of SELA to contribute to strengthen this space for rapprochement provided by the meetings of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will be marking its 20th anniversary next year.

Thank you very much.

**Speech by Luz María de la Mora,
Head of the Unit for Economic Relations and International Cooperation
of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico**

Mr. Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System;

Mr. Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation;

Ms. Esperanza Durán, Executive Director of the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information;

Mr. Frans Lammersen, Principal Administrator of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development;

Mr. Máximo Romero Jiménez, General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico;

Ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning to you all.

On behalf of the Government of Mexico and the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, I would like to warmly welcome you to the XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean, which will deal with the issue of "International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation" on this occasion.

It is a great pleasure for us to host this meeting organized by SELA in the headquarters of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

During a recently held forum on Financing for Development, held in Doha, participants recognized that "aid for trade is, without doubt, an engine for development". Mexico shares this view. Therefore, this is a perfect time to deal with this subject matter.

In view of the financial crisis affecting us, we have to find new formulas which allow us to ensure continued progress for our peoples amid adverse circumstances. And it seems that such formula is well known and shared by all of our countries: international cooperation for development.

This two-day meeting, organized by SELA, will allow us to define actions and strategies for us to take advantage of a trade facilitation policy with the following objectives:

1. Developing countries, particularly relatively less developed countries, should use trade as an efficient mechanism to promote growth and employment, reduce poverty, and accomplish their development goals.
2. In addition, such policy should allow us to analyze how to facilitate access to international markets for developing countries, by helping them to build on and modernize their trade capacities.
3. It should help us to support our regional integration, as well as our region's integration into the global trade system.

The development strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean requires financial and technical assistance to improve our physical and social infrastructure, as well as our countries' productive potential in order to consolidate development of our capacities.

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Mexico is convinced about the need for the region's countries to make strides towards trade facilitation. Relevant data indicate that approximately 40 percent of the European Union's imports come from developing countries, but within that group, Latin America and the Caribbean are well below other regions. This reality should raise concerns among us, since the EU is the second largest market of the world.

Many countries and specialized international organizations have focused their work on two major thematic areas: aid for trade and trade facilitation. During these two days, the experts will make remarks on the best practices in this area.

Aid for trade and trade facilitation can be two pillars for development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, with trade being the engine for economic growth and a factor for poverty reduction in developing countries.

The current WTO trade negotiations round – the Doha Development Round – gives priority to the trade needs of developing countries and the issue of trade facilitation.

In order to achieve full integration of the Latin American and Caribbean region – where there are more than 19 middle-income countries – it is necessary to ensure much more than open market access. Aid for Trade helps developing countries to take advantage of trade opportunities through actions aimed at training exporters so that they comply with sanitary and security norms, while promoting entrepreneurship in those nations.

In order to reap the benefits of trade, we should make progress towards overcoming supply constraints as well as our own structural deficiencies. This entails national reforms to facilitate trade, including better customs managements, modernization of infrastructure, productive capacity building, as well as development of national and regional markets, among others.

The World Trade Organization states that the application of a policy aimed at promoting aid for trade and trade facilitation contributes to generate economic growth, employment and income. This is in line with the Millennium Development Goals, which include the objectives of reducing by half the number of people living with less than one dollar per day and of establishing a trade and financial system based on non-discriminatory norms and treatment.

At present, the European Union has one of the most advanced models as far as trade facilitation is concerned. Under its trade agreements, it provides technical assistance and financing through support mechanisms that do not distort trade. UE resources have contributed, for instance, to the economic development, stability and prosperity of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, which are the beneficiaries of the partnership agreements that helped them with their necessary economic transition to become EU members.

The Permanent Secretariat of SELA has an ideal position to support the creation of programmes that allow for growth of trade facilitation.

For example, we are proposing to create an *"Exporters Desk for Developing Countries"*. Such a "Desk" should be an *online* tool on export. It should operate as a free, comprehensive source available to enterprises and exporters in the countries of the region, so as to help them export their goods to preferential markets, such as the United States or the EU. The *"Exporters Desk"* should have information on tariffs, required

documents, rules of origin, specific requirements for import products, applicable taxes, and a means to search for business partners.

Another initiative suggested by Mexico to SELA is the creation of an Enterprise Development Centre, which could provide support in the application of strategies to develop the private sector in the region, by offering non-financial services to companies and enterprises in those countries, and support joint initiatives of the most important economic operators for that purpose, such as the United States and the European Union.

Similarly, Mexico also suggests to work – jointly with SELA – in the creation of a Latin American and Caribbean Fund for Development, an instrument which could serve to support cooperation and development assistance. Such Fund would be financed by all of the Member States of SELA, would operate in accordance with its own rules and would be managed by a fully accountable committee.

Trade facilitation can be a powerful tool for development. If it is duly directed and managed, in a progressive way, along with development assistance, it can become an engine for growth that promotes the generation of jobs and contributes to eradicate poverty.

Let's work to accomplish this goal, which will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening the Latin American and Caribbean region.

I am convinced that the debates that we will hold during these two days will have concrete results.

Thank you very much.

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Opening Session:

At 10:30 am, on 9 December 2008, I formally open the activities of the **XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean**, of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

I sincerely wish – and I am convinced that it will be so – that the activities that we are starting today will bring about huge benefits for the region and will contribute to strengthen the community of nations that share common interests in SELA.

Thank you very much.

**Speech by Alison Roofe, Deputy Director, Foreign Trade Department
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica**

**“International Cooperation for Trade Facilitation:
Jamaica’s National Experience”**

I am sure, Mr. Chairman, that we are allowed to be frank in sharing our national experiences and I will begin by saying that Jamaica, at the start, was a very reluctant participant in the Trade Facilitation negotiations as they unfolded in the WTO discussions in Geneva.

In my experience, as a participant in the 2005 WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Conference, we had a list of concerns which we made clear then. This included the implications for small, middle-income countries like Jamaica to commit to possible Trade Facilitation (TF) aspects which might be subject to many obligations including dispute settlement procedures. We were also wary of the seeming attempt to have us agree to commitments that might affect the pace of our own customs modernization process – a process which is ongoing and extremely successful within the CARICOM region.

Jamaica is very clear that the DDA mandate and the fact of improved TF procedures can serve to aid the movement of goods across borders, but we are also aware of the difficult process of implementing agreements, particularly coming out of our experience of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. With that in mind, our negotiators have participated in the Geneva negotiations and currently Jamaica serves as the ACP focal point on TF in the DDA discussions.

What has this meant for our country at the practical level? How have the WTO TF discussions and the broader global agenda affected our ability to implement transparent, consistent and predictable practices with the aim of reducing transaction costs and improving the national and regional trading environment?

I must reiterate – and I have our Commissioner of Customs, Mr. Danville Walker, with me to substantiate this – the Jamaican impetus to create a modern vision for TF goes back some 10-15 years. It has been a complex, multi-agency process, built with stakeholder support and occurring at three distinct levels of activity, namely: the multilateral, the regional, in the context of CARICOM and now CARIFORUM (I see my colleagues from the Dominican Republic here) and thirdly, at the national level with local imperatives that have resulted in continued administrative and institutional reform and a unique experience of border management and control, an attempt to improve our revenue base and to facilitate both exporters and importers in their bid to move goods across the region and internationally.

Multilaterally, Jamaica's engagement in the international discussions on TF led to a successful, WTO-sponsored National Self-Assessment exercise which was held from July 28 to 31 this year in Kingston. Part of Jamaica's agreeing to participate in a Needs Assessment exercise came from Jamaica wanting to make sure that the technical assistance that becomes necessary for implementing new and improved procedures is tailor-made for our specific needs and local priorities. Any assistance must serve to benefit improved commerce at all levels and among all economic players – whether small or large business interests.

Jamaica has always made clear the importance of the provision of technical assistance coming out of the Doha mandate and that such assistance should be effective, well targeted and needs-driven. What came out of the Needs Assessment exercise? Forty-seven proposed measures coming out of the TF negotiations were examined against which a needs assessment chart was completed, which included indicators such as: the current situation relative to the basic standard, the barriers to meet the basic standard,

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local actions and technical assistance required, identifying the local agency responsible and of course determining how much of a priority the relevant measure was for Jamaica.

In terms of preparedness, on examining the 47 measures, Jamaica was found to be compliant with 14 measures (30%), partially compliant with 26 (55%), not compliant with 2 (4%) and 5 measures were not applicable (11%). Measures where we are fully compliant include: expedited shipments, customs cooperation, import alerts/rapid alerts, prior consultation and comment on new and amended rules and the option to return rejected goods to the importer. Partial compliance related in part to the single window/one time submission, risk management, the establishment of enquiry points, pre-arrival processing and post-clearance audit.

All our stakeholders generally agreed on where the resource gaps are. They include: the need for specialized training (in particular, in risk management, advance rulings and appeals procedures), the provision of IT infrastructure and the need for technical support for legislative drafting. Importantly – and again this takes us back to the ongoing pattern and pace of the Geneva negotiations – even though the proposals gave the stakeholders a sense of the type of TF commitments that may have to be undertaken at the end of the Round, these proposals have not yet been agreed and are still the subject of negotiations.

What I would also like to stress is that Jamaica continues to assume a wider subset of commitments and obligations as part of FTAs negotiated with CARICOM and Third countries. I would make special mention of the CARIFORUM-EC EPA concluded in December last year and signed in October 2008, which means we have a parallel process – albeit onerous – of review and implementation on TF. The text of the relevant chapter of the EPA on TF is included in the Annex of the background documents for this Conference. Jamaica is also involved in ongoing work on TF being undertaken jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat and a benchmarking study with the Singaporeans.

Regionally, Jamaica has signed onto commitments under the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, which has given legal structure to the CARICOM Single Market and Economy – again a parallel universe which imposes commitments and has a direct impact on tariff revenues and customs cooperation.

I will speak briefly now to CARICOM regional customs cooperation. Presently, there are three measures which encourage the cooperation of Customs officials in the Caribbean. Firstly, there is the Caribbean Custom Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC), which is an association of customs' administrations in the Caribbean. Its mission is to upgrade the effectiveness and efficiency of member Customs administrations in pursuing their mandates, through cooperation, sharing of best practices, human resource development, modernization, automation, harmonization of processes and procedures and information/intelligence sharing. The CCLEC has annual conferences at which various issues are discussed such as border protection, intercepting illegal shipments and the improvement of system administration through effective communication among the customs departments in the region. They have also held workshops to sensitize and train customs officials. During the workshops, customs officials are introduced to the latest border protection techniques and their intricacies. Secondly, there is the Customs Committee of COTED, which meets to discuss trade and tariff matters relating to COTED's agenda to advise the various Ministers in CARICOM so as to secure and improve trade in the region. Finally, statisticians, trade exports and Customs officials (STECO) meet to assign Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) codes and discuss issues related to the

collection and reporting of trade data. This cooperation also serves to enhance the harmonization of the Customs systems in the region.

In the pursuit of effective management of the activities of each customs administration, information is often shared amongst officials with the goal of harmonizing their systems. For instance, the tariff department at Jamaica Customs may have a problem classifying an item and have to ask Trinidadian Customs to assist with the classification of that item. Also, due to the fact that the region is plagued with continued trafficking in drugs and other illegal substances, the region's customs officials have strengthened their cooperation to combat this. We have combined forces with the United States and other countries in securing of our borders for example, the "Shiprider Agreement."

Even though, the annual conferences held by the CCLEC are generally effective, they can be enhanced by better dissemination of information on the issues, findings and resolution of the meetings to the various departments in the respective countries. In terms of workshops, these could be improved by increased frequency and expanded to include more customs officials because the present training only accommodates a few officials and not all the countries in the region are represented.

And finally – the national level or the local imperatives, that have been part of our response to the international cooperation on TF – again the specific concerns Jamaica has had can be better addressed by the Customs Commissioner, who is here with us. But the long-term vision, which drives the administrative and institutional reform in Jamaica Customs in particular, is not only to facilitate trade but also to protect the revenue base of the country. Valuation remains a problematic issue and currently under-invoicing leads to losses of between 5-7 billion U.S. dollars per annum.

For Jamaica, official reports will indicate 21 days to clear goods. In reality, the time is now much shorter and 50% of all entries to Customs are cleared in two hours to two days. Where delays occur, they are usually the result of improperly completed documents or valuation issues. Over the next few years, Jamaica Customs will seek to continue to increase its efficiency and its involvement in monitoring developments and discussions in the WTO and the WCO.

In conclusion, colleagues, this is a difficult journey. Jamaica is prepared to lead the charge within the Caribbean, conscious of the hard work which has been consistently put in over many years of reform and inter-regional cooperation. We are hopeful that out of this conference we will conceive of and indeed begin to implement even greater levels of cooperation within the larger Latin American and Caribbean economic area. Increased South-South Cooperation is an essential element in that process.

I thank you.

**Closing speech by Mr. Máximo Romero,
General Director of Technical and Scientific Cooperation
of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs of Mexico**

Mr. Antonio Romero, Director of Relations for Integration and Cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System;

Mr. Gabriel Duque, Deputy Director of Competitiveness and Public Policies of the Andean Development Corporation;

Ms. Esperanza Durán, Executive Director of the Agency for International Trade Cooperation and Information;

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of the Member States of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System;

Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of Mexican Institutions,

Dear friends:

For Mexico, the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, the Unit for International Cooperation and Economic Relations, and for myself, it has been a great honour and pleasure to have hosted the XIX Meeting of International Cooperation Directors for Latin America and the Caribbean, convened by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

During these two days, a large number of specialists have delivered presentations on the global trends as regards aid for trade and trade facilitation. As underscored yesterday by our colleague from Grenada, "we still have a lot of work to do", not only this coming year, but in future years, in order to make strides in the region towards strengthening regional cooperation in these areas.

In this connection, I would like to highlight three fundamental aspects:

1. The enormous potential we have to develop cooperation projects in these areas.
2. The urgent need to promote actions to facilitate trade, with the support of international cooperation.
3. The advantages offered by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System to make strides towards consolidation in this regard.

To this end, I would like to call upon all of you attending this meeting to continue to analyze what we have discussed in these two days in order to materialize, in the near future, projects to join efforts in support of national actions to enforce the necessary public policies for trade facilitation.

Finally, I wish to thank you all for your participation, and I wish you have a good trip back home, or your workplaces. I would also like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very successful New Year 2009.

Many thanks.

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