

# **Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas: Guidelines and Actions To Increase Economic Opportunity and Social Justice Through Trade and Investment**

**Panama, Republic of Panama**  
**December 10, 2008**

**We**, the Ministers of Foreign Relations and Ministers responsible for Trade, or their representatives, of Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and the Dominican Republic,

**Acknowledging** that all sectors of our countries should benefit fully from the opportunities generated by open markets, trade liberalization and cooperation;

**Reaffirming** that in light of the global financial crisis, trade and investment liberalization is essential for economic growth, sustainable development, poverty reduction, social justice and democracy in the Hemisphere;

**Recalling** that on September 24, 2008, Heads of Government and representatives from Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru and the United States launched the Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas initiative to “support increased efforts to deepen our partnership and cooperation to ensure that the benefits of free trade and open investment are more broadly shared throughout our societies;”

**Welcoming** our colleagues from the Oriental Republic of Uruguay and reiterating that participation in Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas is open to all countries in the Hemisphere—as participants or observers—that share our commitment to democracy, the rule of law, open markets, trade liberalization and the importance of cooperation;

**Also welcoming** the presence of Brazil as an observer;

**Also welcoming** the presence of Ecuador as an observer;

**Further welcoming** international organizations such as the Caribbean Community Secretariat, the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the Andean Development Corporation;

**Reiterating** our call for a prompt and ambitious conclusion of the World Trade Organization’s Doha Development Round;

**Supporting** the expeditious legislative approval of pending free trade agreements in the Hemisphere, including agreements signed by Canada, Colombia, the United States, Panama and Peru;

**Applauding** Costa Rica's efforts to complete the steps necessary for entry into force of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement as soon as possible;

**Supporting** the commitments regarding trade agreed at the recent Washington G-20 Summit and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' meeting in Lima, Peru;

**Reaffirming** that this initiative is complementary with other regional efforts to promote economic integration within and throughout the Hemisphere, including through the Summit of the Americas process, the Latin America Pacific Arc Forum, the Central American Economic Integration process, and the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership;

**We resolve** to adopt the following guidelines and actions as set out in the joint Communiqué issued by our Heads of Government and representatives on September 24, 2008:

1. Increase opportunities for our citizens, particularly small businesses and farmers, to take advantage of trade through trade capacity building and other initiatives by:
  - a. Developing programs directed at small farmers, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises of the industrial and service sectors, giving them access to the necessary training and financing in order to benefit from the opportunities offered by the liberalization of trade and investment flows.
  - b. Continuing to promote and facilitate investment in infrastructure, communications, energy, transport, tourism and agro-industry to boost Hemispheric trade even further.
  - c. Supporting agricultural productivity enhancement and further linking small farmers to local, regional and international markets.
  - d. Improving the quality of and providing greater access to the development of skills and entrepreneurial capacities to expand economic opportunities, particularly for youth, indigenous communities, and other vulnerable groups.
  - e. Increasing access to education and training opportunities for workforce development that responds to the needs of the labor market, including through public-private partnerships.
  - f. Promoting greater access for women to technical training and initiatives that seek to expand the benefits derived from trade liberalization.

2. Promote and deepen an open architecture for regional trade consistent with the multilateral trading system through:

a. Identifying ways to deepen hemispheric integration that complement efforts currently in place in this regard, including the following priority areas:

- Reducing or eliminating barriers, including administrative ones, that hinder investment and the trade of goods and services in the Hemisphere.
- Promoting cooperation on the issue of trade facilitation in the Hemisphere, taking into account those areas linked to the compatibility and improvement of customs administration and the elimination of unjustified barriers to trade, among others.
- Increasing the region's competitiveness and deepening the economic connectivity between our national and regional markets, including through the identification of cross-border barriers that create bottle-necks.

3. Expand regional cooperation on economic development and competitiveness by:

a. Exchanging experiences with respect to best practices related to specific development strategies and to competitive integration with international markets that have produced an effective reduction in the levels of poverty.

b. Deepening cooperation toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, underscoring the importance of trade and investment liberalization to address the priorities identified by the Pathways Initiative.

c. Increasing the links of our countries with multilateral financial institutions, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Andean Development Corporation, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to strengthen even further development policies in order to take better advantage of the opportunities generated by Free Trade Agreements.

d. Fostering greater cooperation among different export and investment promotion agencies, especially with regard to taking advantage of trade opportunities.

e. Promoting literacy, education, foreign language instruction, technical and professional training, and workforce capacity to help citizens take advantage of the opportunities offered by trade and investment liberalization.

f. Continuing to promote access to information and communication technologies with the purpose of increasing competitiveness.

g. Taking steps to improve cooperation and foster competitiveness by promoting science, technology, innovation and the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights.

h. Identifying the best ways to cooperate to improve the competitiveness of micro, small and medium enterprises.

4. Enhance cooperation and exchange best practices on labor and environmental standards and enforcement by:

a. Enhancing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation on labor issues by sharing information and best practices related to strengthening labor institutions, enhancing social dialogue, and improving policy design and program implementation, including through public-private partnerships.

b. Promoting responsible corporate practices with respect to labor issues.

c. Enhancing the efficiency of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperative environmental work by sharing information and best practices on projects or programs in the following areas:

- Strengthening institutional capacity and policies for effective implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, including natural resource-related laws.
- Biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of forests, protected areas, and other ecologically important ecosystems;
- Transparency and meaningful public participation in environmental decision-making and enforcement processes;
- Promoting community and voluntary incentive-based activities for environmental protection; and
- Improving private sector environmental performance, including through voluntary, incentive-based activities.

5. Engage civil society and the private sector to advance these objectives, including through promotion of public-private partnerships, by:

a. Strengthening consultative mechanisms in our countries to facilitate the exchange of ideas and policy recommendations from civil society and the private sector.

b. Promoting the development of a virtual network for regional civil society representatives to facilitate the collaboration of regional think tanks, NGOs and development organizations with each other to exchange views, conduct policy studies and provide policy recommendations for Pathways partners.

c. Promoting the development of regional networks, particularly in science and technology, business, and other fields that support innovation, trade, economic growth, and sustainable development.

**We decided** to meet again in El Salvador during the first half of 2009 with the objective of taking stock of the work done to implement this Declaration. To this end, the following countries will coordinate work in the thematic areas that we have identified:

- Increasing opportunities (Honduras)
- Deepening the trade architecture (Chile)
- Expanding cooperation on development and competitiveness (Panama)
- Enhancing cooperation on labor and environment (Peru)

The coordinating countries will propose additional specific actions to be examined in our next meeting.

Done in Panama, Republic of Panama, on the 10th day of December, 2008.