

The Government agrees with Recommendation No. 1 that the Minister for International Trade encourage his colleagues to actively engage civil society in their respective countries in a meaningful consultation process. On the margins of the FTAA Ministerial Meeting in Toronto, the Government sponsored the Americas Civil Society Forum organized by NGOs under the leadership of a Canadian organization, Common Frontiers. A highlight of this forum was the meeting of 22 FTAA Trade Ministers and Vice-Ministers with representatives from organizations from a cross-section of civil society from across the Americas. The Ministers were presented with a wide range of recommendations that were developed at the Americas Civil Society Forum and engaged in a question and answer session with participants. This meeting was an unprecedented event in the trade negotiation process. Just as importantly, the Americas Civil Society Forum demonstrated to the different participating countries that such dialogue is feasible and to the benefit of all parties involved. The Canadian organizers should be commended for their key role in ensuring that the many voices from the hemisphere could participate in the Forum, both constructively and inclusively.

One of the key outcomes of the Toronto Ministerial is that Ministers agreed to continue to hear from representatives of civil society throughout the hemisphere through the mechanism of the FTAA Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society. The Government believes that considerable progress has been made in engaging our hemispheric partners on civil society issues, taking into account that we are in very early days in the negotiations themselves and in the FTAA dialogue with civil society, and will be promoting continuous civil society engagement throughout the FTAA negotiations.

Considering that international trade is a significant contributor to all levels of the Canadian economy, the provincial and territorial governments are actively consulted on all aspects of trade policy and contribute to the development of trade priorities that reflect the interests and aims of all governments and the people they serve. Accordingly, the Government agrees with the Committee's 2nd Recommendation.

