

The FTAA negotiating process will be transparent, and take into account the differences in the levels of development and size of the economies in the Americas, in order to create the opportunities for the full participation by all countries. We encourage all segments of civil society to participate in and contribute to the process in a constructive manner, through our respective mechanisms of dialogue and consultation and by presenting their views through the mechanism created in the FTAA negotiating process. We believe that economic integration, investment, and free trade are key factors for raising standards of living, improving the working conditions of the people of the Americas and better protecting the environment. These issues will be taken into account as we proceed with the economic integration process in the Americas.

The region has made significant advances in both monetary and fiscal policy as well as in price stability and liberalizing our economies. The volatility of capital markets vindicates our decision to strengthen banking supervision in the Hemisphere and to establish regulations relating to disclosure and reporting of banking information.

The strength and meaning of representative democracy lie in the active participation of individuals at all levels of civic life. The democratic culture must encompass our entire population. We will strengthen education for democracy and promote the necessary actions for government institutions to become more participatory structures. We undertake to strengthen the capabilities of regional and local governments, when appropriate, and to foster more active participation in civil society.

Respect for and promotion of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all individuals is a primary concern of our governments. In commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we agree on the need to promote the ratification and implementation of the international agreements aimed at preserving them and to continue strengthening the pertinent national and international institutions. We agree that a free press plays a fundamental role in this area and we reaffirm the importance of guaranteeing freedom of expression, information, and opinion. We commend the recent appointment of a Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, within the framework of the Organization of American States.

Confident that an independent, efficient, and effective administration of justice plays an essential role in the process of consolidating democracy, strengthens its institutions, guarantees the equality of all its citizens, and contributes to economic development, we will enhance our policies relating to justice and encourage the reforms necessary to promote legal and judicial cooperation. To that end, we will strengthen national entities involved in the study of the administration of justice and expedite the establishment of a hemispheric center for studies on this subject.