

As part of my daily practice now as a trade official, I have a host of informal meetings: labour officials, environmental officials, and onwards. And indeed, this week I was very much impressed that I met with a coalition that had been put together, again before I came on the scene, to deal with a bill that was passed last year with Africa. It is the AGOA Coalition: *The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act*.

And this coalition was particularly impressive to me because it drew in, not only some of the groups I have mentioned, but it also encompassed faith-based organizations, civil rights groups. There is an extremely broad set of constituencies, and what gave me particular delight is that not only do they want to support trade with Africa, but they seek possibilities to work with us on other problems with Africa, whether it be HIV/AIDS, whether it be economic growth, and they are now interested in a broader set of trade issues.

I think another core aspect of the FTAA will be this organized effort to reach out to civil society. Now, in some ways, this is an unusual process, to organize civil society, because the whole nature of the process is to make it a free flow in our democracy.

But I also think there is a flow-back mechanism, and while we will benefit from civil society, I firmly believe that free trade will benefit civil society throughout this hemisphere because the heart of free trade is freedom. It's freedom of ideas, it's freedom of people and exchanging thoughts, it's debate, it's openness, it's transparency, it's going and building trust in government institutions by shining the light of openness, and so we identify corruption related to regulation and red tape. And so ultimately I think our long-term success will be built on creating an environment in which local groups within the hemisphere can plant their own roots and develop their own connections to their political system's democratic relations, to be able to promote environmental causes, free trade unions, and a host of other civil rights and other organizations.

Let me just close with a point on this: I know that some people debate the role of NAFTA, and in this, to me, beyond the economic issues there is an extremely strong political point. I dealt first with Mexico in the mid-1980s during the debt crisis, and the Mexico of today is a very different country than the Mexico of the 1980s.

And the most striking example was the presentation by President Fox today. You now have the first elected president from the opposition since Mexico's revolution, and that man is changing the country along the lines that all us believe is important, not the least of which is the change on some of these transparency issues. And so you could have no better example of how the openness of trade changes societies.

My last word on this, for those who perhaps have less experience with Latin America, is: recognize how far we have come. This is the hemisphere that enshrined the *Calvo Doctrine*, in part in response to some of the actions of my country at earlier points.

The *Calvo Doctrine*, obviously, took an extremely strong view about the infringement of sovereignty by outsiders. And now, over the course of a decade, we have the democracy clause within the OAS, we have had it in Mercosur, and now we have it in this