

*Toward the Santiago Summit:
A Consultation with Civil Society
on Democracy, Human Rights, and Economic Integration*

A Report on the Workshop Proceedings

Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC)
York University

Friday, 24 October 1997

An Overview of the Workshop

The Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC), in conjunction with the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), organized this public policy workshop at York University. The purpose of the event was to provide a forum for individuals and organizations from civil society in Ontario to express their views concerning the issues of democracy, human rights, and economic integration in the Americas and to furnish the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) with policy proposals in preparation for the Summit of the Americas planned for April 1998 in Santiago, Chile. A diverse group of approximately 35 participants from the university sector, non-governmental organizations, Canadian churches, the private sector, the media, and youth took part in the day's proceedings, with emphasis placed by the organizers on giving a voice to societal actors who have traditionally lacked institutionalized or regular means of influencing Canadian foreign policy.

The workshop agenda was divided into two sets of activities. In the morning, a series of five presentations were made by selected participants on the themes of "economic integration, social participation, and the Summit," and on "human rights, democratization, and the Summit." These presentations served as the basis for a subsequent round table discussion. In the afternoon, participants were sub-divided into three working groups: (1) human rights and democracy; (2) labour and social participation; and (3) economic integration, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and the Inter-American system. Each group discussed its respective topic, focusing on identifying the key issues for civil society in the FTAA and Summit processes, evaluating developments since the Miami Summit, and assessing a set of draft documents provided by DFAIT. At the end of the day, the working groups presented their findings and recommendations in a general plenary session. In what follows, this draft report highlights the views and recommendations expressed in the presentations and by the three working groups identified above. All these recommendations represent a consensus among the event's participants.