

it is critical to get Chilean accession right, there is no reason why, in time, all countries that agree to abide by the NAFTA rules should not be welcome. Nor is there any reason to limit this expansion to the Western Hemisphere.

The accession clause of the NAFTA does not speak of "Western Hemisphere countries", ~~but simply of "countries or groups of countries."~~ The acid test of membership should be a commitment to submit to the disciplines of the Agreement and a willingness to work together to push the trade and investment agenda forward.

For other countries in the hemisphere, the accession route offers entry into a dynamic, high-quality agreement that is already in place — no small advantage given the protectionist forces currently arrayed against additional trade liberalization in the United States.

Not without scars, Canada has run the gauntlet with U.S. negotiators twice in the last five years — and we are the United States' largest trading partner. One can only guess how a Chile or an Argentina, standing alone, would fare against an increasingly restive and protectionist U.S. Congress. Equally important, NAFTA could serve as a bridge among the increasingly complex web of free trade initiatives that have proliferated in the Western Hemisphere.

As for the three existing NAFTA partners, broadening the Agreement offers more than access to growing markets. It offers new partnerships and new alliances to tackle the hard trade issues of the future, and provides a more balanced negotiating framework in which to achieve these goals.

It also offers us a powerful tool in our dealings with the rest of the world by demonstrating that those countries unwilling to move toward greater liberalization risk being left behind in the wake of dynamic regionalism.

As such, the NAFTA has the potential to set in motion an external, competitive dynamic to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers worldwide — the potential, that is, to kick-start a new round of global trade liberalization. For ultimately it is to the multilateral trading system in general — and to the newly created World Trade Organization in particular — that we must look for the long-term future of free trade.

Already the link between what we have done trilaterally and the broader multilateral trade agenda has been a direct one. For example, on the newly emerging issue of trade and environment, the discussions which have taken place in the GATT reflect our negotiating experience with the NAFTA side agreements.