

initiatives. It has been evident that in the 1990s Latin American leaders have viewed the integrationist, cooperative direction as desirable. Between 1990 and mid-1997, nations of the region concluded 14 major agreements involving customs unions or free trade areas. At the same time as they have moved ahead with this multilateral agenda, Caribbean and Latin American countries have been unilaterally liberalizing their trade, investment and regulatory regimes in order to promote efficiency and enhance competitiveness.

Nonetheless, there is a general perception that since the Miami Summit in December 1994 the pace of hemispheric integration has not been as positive as had been hoped, either in terms of economic integration or in terms of the establishment of a political environment conducive to that integration. Subregional cooperation has tended to be more vigorous than the broader and more ambitious FTAA, which has a target date of 2005. The presidents of Central America have held regular, twice-yearly meetings to address common problems; the nations of Mercosur have both strengthened their trade group and brought Chile and Bolivia into the organization as associate members; and the United States, Canada and Mexico continue to implement the provisions of NAFTA. One of the current problems remains a lack of full confidence in the capacity of the OAS to play the role of an effective and efficient catalyst in the integrationist agenda. The weakness of the OAS is further exacerbated by the Caribbean and Latin American preference for the organization to remain impotent, to prevent it from being used as a more powerful tool of U.S. policies.⁵

United States policy in the past several years has also been an impediment to hemispheric integration. The failure of the Clinton Administration to obtain fast-track authority has stalled the incorporation of Chile into NAFTA and undermined the U.S. capability to initiate trade agreements with other regional governments. The U.S. has also failed to establish an interim trade

⁵*The Americas in 1997: Making Cooperation Work*. A Report of the Sol M. Linowitz Forum, Washington: Inter-American Dialogue, 1996.