

multilateral negotiation – the Tokyo Round – which ended in 1979. The evolving negotiating agenda is now very complex and increasingly expansive. More players everywhere are prepared to engage more substantively than before.

Of course, some newly industrializing economies are pushing harder and more constructively than others, depending on the specifics of the issue in play.

On the other hand, several developing countries are more concretely committed than some industrialized nations to specific trade reforms. The willingness of certain Latin American and Asian countries to push much harder than the European Union for far greater cuts in agricultural subsidies during the Uruguay Round is a case in point.

With an increasing number of issues in play, and more players prepared to engage actively but often at cross-purposes, the multilateral game has become more difficult to sustain without creative regional efforts that seek to go farther faster, thereby goading the global system as a whole into action.

In this regard, three regional initiatives have recently captured much attention: first, transpacific efforts through the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation [APEC] forum with its goal of free trade by 2010/2020; second, the re-engineering of post-Cold War transatlantic links in light of concerns raised by Canada and others about drift in that important economic relationship; and third, Western Hemisphere free trade.

There should be no doubt about the importance of these regional initiatives, although they enjoy differing degrees of precision and different senses of timing. They comprise key tracks along which the trading community will pursue better market access through further rule making, whether on a building block, step-by-step basis that remains largely regional, or by folding some or all of these processes into a more comprehensive, global negotiation sooner rather than later – that is, through the launch of a new multilateral trade Round.

There are many good ideas and surprisingly broad interest in seeking further economic integration – from this perspective, we live in interesting times. The real question, nonetheless, is how to move forward toward the concrete negotiations stage. That is, how do we get from here to there? In this regard, the regional initiative that has so far generated the most concrete, albeit still fragile, momentum lies in Canada's immediate backyard: the Western Hemisphere.

This hemisphere took up the free trade gauntlet in December 1994 at the Miami Summit of the Americas.