

7. INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Recognizing that the development of physical infrastructure is an important complement to economic integration; that advances in the area of infrastructure will release new driving forces toward a broad and deep integration, setting in motion dynamics that should be encouraged; and that infrastructure projects geared to integration should be complemented by the adoption of regulatory and administrative regimes that facilitate their implementation:

Telecommunications

Recognizing that states have the sovereign right to regulate their own telecommunications sectors and that affordable and universal access to new information and communications technologies is an important means to raise the living standards of our citizens and reduce the divide between rural and urban populations, and between countries; noting the importance of increasing cooperation with the private sector to further modernize and expand our telecommunications sectors; acknowledging and reaffirming our efforts in and dedication to market opening and increasing free, fair and equitable competition in all telecommunications services, while respecting the regulatory framework of each country, in order to attract investment needed to develop infrastructure and to reduce the cost of service; stressing the importance of adopting policies to protect the interests of users and enhance the quality, efficiency, coverage and diversity of services, all based on respect for user privacy; and bearing in mind the social, political, economic, commercial and cultural needs of our populations, in particular those of less developed communities:

Propose measures designed to modernize national laws, as appropriate, based on principles such as: permanence of strong and independent regulatory bodies; a pro-competitive approach, including the adoption of rules on dominant operators; a flexible regulatory framework consistent with technological convergence, and to develop human and institutional capacity in support of these principles;

Facilitate the upgrading of human resources in the telecommunications sector through ongoing training programs on telecommunications policy, regulation, management and technology, and request the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), in coordination with national agencies, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s Centre of Excellence for the Americas, and in partnership with regional and subregional organizations and the private sector, to create a focal point for information on human resource development programs to foster exchanges of information on relevant training programs among governments, universities, industry associations and the private sector, in order to assist countries of the Americas in meeting the growing need for trained and competent personnel in the rapidly changing knowledge-based economy;

Take measures striving to implement the *Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) for Conformity Assessment* developed by CITEL without prejudice to each participant's sovereign right to regulate its own telecommunications sector, and encourage discussion of adequate standards to ensure interoperability for existing and future telecommunications networks and the timely introduction of technology in new and existing markets, taking into account the regulations and recommendations of the ITU and other appropriate standard-setting bodies;