

- In June 1998, TNC establishes work programmes for the nine negotiating groups and three consultative bodies.
- In September and October 1998, the nine negotiating groups and three consultative bodies hold first meetings to organize their work.
- In December 1998, TNC reviews the work of the negotiating groups and consultative groups and makes progress on business facilitation.
- Selection of a Canadian to serve as Director of the FTAA Administrative Secretariat in Miami.

In 1999, Canada will:

- get detailed negotiations off to a strong start in all subject areas;
- advance business facilitation agenda, focusing initial work on streamlining of customs procedures;
- develop a collective process of consultation with civil society in the Americas;
- put institutional foundations in place including making the FTAA Administrative Secretariat in Miami operational; and
- move the FTAA forward at the Trade Ministers Meeting to be hosted by Canada in Toronto, November 1999.

The FTAA negotiations were officially launched by Prime Minister Chrétien and other hemispheric leaders in April 1998 based on the objectives, principles, structures, venues and other decisions set forth in the Joint Declaration issued by Trade Ministers in San José, Costa Rica, in March 1998. Key objectives and principles guiding the negotiations are that the FTAA will maximize market openness through a balanced and comprehensive agreement; that it will be consistent with the rules and disciplines of the WTO; and that countries are to accept the agreement as a single undertaking. Acceptance of the agreement as a "single undertaking" means that countries cannot "pick-and-choose" among the various chapters or provisions of the agreement but must accept it on an "all-or-nothing" basis.

Also at the San José meeting, Trade Ministers recognized the leadership role that the Canadian Government played in launching the FTAA negotiations by selecting Canada to chair the negotiations until October 1999. In this capacity, Canada chairs

the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) of Chief Negotiators. Canada will also host the next meeting of Trade Ministers, slated for November 1999 in Toronto.

The first TNC meeting was held in Buenos Aires in June 1998. It established the work programmes for the nine negotiating groups and three special bodies focussing on horizontal issues.

The Nine FTAA Negotiating Groups

- Market Access
- Agriculture
- Investment
- Services
- Government Procurement
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Subsidies, Anti-dumping & Countervailing Duties
- Competition Policy
- Dispute Settlement

The Three Special Bodies

- Subsidies, Anti-dumping & Countervailing
- Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society
- Consultative Group on Smaller Economies
- Joint Government-Private

All twelve groups held their first meetings last September or October in Miami. The results of the initial meetings were then reviewed by the TNC at its December 1998 meeting in Suriname. The TNC also made progress on a range of other issues in Suriname. Of particular importance was agreement by the TNC on a process for advancing the business facilitation agenda in the run-up to the Ministerial Meeting to be held in November, and to focus initial work on customs procedures. Canada as Chair is spearheading an exchange of documentation and will reconvene the TNC in Miami in the spring of 1999 to focus on the business facilitation issue. Given the absence of U.S. fast track negotiating authority, progress on business facilitation will be crucial to achieving the concrete progress by 2000 mandated by hemispheric leaders and Trade Ministers. It will therefore be a key issue at the Ministerial Meeting.