

Mutual Misgivings: Civil Society Inclusion in the Americas

by
Yasmine Shamsie

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VOICES: The Rise of Nongovernmental Voices in Multilateral Organizations
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VOICES

The Rise of Nongovernmental Voices In Multilateral Institutions

Voices is a research project seeking to clarify the state of play in relations between civil society organizations — social movements, NGOs, and other elements — and the major multilateral organizations that govern the world’s economy and much more.

In a series of case studies, Voices aims to identify and compare current practices and relations, examine the motivations of key players, highlight pivotal issues, and identify innovations and lessons learned.

Voices authors include academic observers, policy advisors, independent researchers, and practitioners with movement experience.

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Inter-American Organizations Encounter Civil Society

The Americas offer the parallel and inter-related theatres of civil society inter-action with regional organizations: the Organization of American States (OAS), the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Summits of the Americas. The onset of trade negotiations on a hemispheric basis, initiated by the Miami Summit of the Americas in 1995, invited responses from the business sector and from civil society organizations (CSOs). Concerns which have animated CSOs regarding global negotiations, whether on investment — the ill-fated Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) — or on trade — the WTO, also bring diverse organizations into play with hemispheric negotiations, whether at the level of trade ministers or of summits like those in Miami, Santiago de Chile, or Quebec. This newly animated relationship is only part of the scene, as the OAS itself has renovated its own more long-standing relations with civil society organizations.

Yasmine Shamsie, in her study *“Mutual Misgivings: Civil Society Inclusion in the Americas,”* provides essential background for understanding how and why relations between CSOs and the three inter-American theatres of negotiation are developing as they are.

Mutual Misgivings: Civil Society Inclusion in the Americas

Introduction

Governments in the Americas have embarked on a new process of consultation with their citizens; but few have approached it with eagerness or confidence. Instead, engagement has been tentative and fraught with a mix of apprehension and grudging necessity. The growing sense of necessity stems from a belated appreciation for the fact that a strong and active citizenry is the indispensable foundation of democratic governance. The apprehension is driven by the many unknowns that pervade the process of consultation, the most fundamental of which is the question of legitimacy, or who civil society organizations (CSOs) actually represent. Adding to the anxiety, governments also know that as they enter the consultation arena, they will inevitably be confronted with groups that forcefully challenge their policies. Still, whether and how governments engage with their critics is surely a potent measure of the vigour of democratic life.

This case study examines civil society participation in three multilateral processes and organizations in the Americas: the hemispheric-wide Organization of American States (OAS); the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and the Summits of the Americas. It seeks to understand the why, what, who, and how of government engagement with CSOs, and to raise issues for further debate and consideration, both within and outside those bodies.¹ The core issues arising out of recent experiences in the Americas are highlighted at the outset, followed by detailed accounts of the processes, players, and dilemmas posed.

Core Issues

Why have multilaterals and CSOs been motivated to engage government in the first place? At root is the matter of governance: democracy, accountability, legitimacy, and representation. Other factors are the practical problems and tensions associated with the creation of consultation mechanisms: adequate information, criteria for participation, equal access, and institutional knowledge.

Governance principles

Traditionally, global governance has been viewed primarily as a set of intergovernmental relationships and agreements on how states should behave. Still, it is clear that multilateral governance must encompass other actors in order to be just and effective. This reform demands that the ethos of the hemisphere's decision-making systems, now more than ever, be based on the principles of consultation, transparency, and accountability.

Democracy

Why have the multilaterals opened the door to greater CSO participation? Perhaps most important is the change in governance norms throughout the hemisphere, now marked by a strong consensus on the importance of representative democracy and citizen participation in political life. This norm extends to multilateral organizations, long perceived as large technocratic bureaucracies inaccessible to the average citizen. Civil society organizations, which in the past focused very little attention on these institutions, are now demanding greater multilateral transparency, accountability, and representation.

At the same time, democracy has heightened the demands made on governments, worrying some observers about competing strains on the system. One OAS official stated that he was concerned about “the presumption on the part of civil society that democratic institutions don’t serve the needs of the people. After all, we live in a system of elected representation, and that is the expression of the popular will.” This sentiment was even echoed by an official from the US, a country that has been supportive of civil society inclusion, when he referred to preparations for the Quebec Summit.

The Quebec City event should be considered the “ultimate civil society meeting” because it will consist of the “ultimate civil society” — the democratically elected leaders of the 34 countries involved in the summit process. These are leaders, he said, “who have put their names on ballots to get elected directly by the people” of their respective nations.²

This belief that current systems are sufficient — that because governments are elected, they de facto represent the views of the people who elected them — implies that consultation with citizens’ groups would be redundant. One government official went so far as to declare: “we are civil society.”

Yet any government can speak only for a portion of the people, part of the time. For the democratic process to be just, citizens deserve to have their views expressed between elections. As one author argues: “The ballot box is a very blunt instrument that is incapable of communicating our choices about all but a very few policies, let alone the fine details of individual initiatives” (Maynes 1989, 1). Even those who voted for the government in power may not agree with all of its policies.

Further, there are political inequalities in every society that cannot be addressed by the equal right to vote or stand for elections. Issues such as gender, race, and access to economic resources contribute to political inequality (Held 1996). Depending solely on formal political instruments like elections (where majorities dominate) excludes marginalized or disadvantaged constituencies from full participation. Consultation helps to inform governments about the views of their electorate. As one CSO representative stated: “Nobody in government claims to know what every citizen is thinking about an issue. That is why we need consultative mechanisms.”

This notion of consultation as a supplement to democracy is a part of the new agenda within the Americas. This model of democracy involves public participation in decision making and administration, as well as elections. As political scientist John Booth points out, democracy is a variable, not a constant. Democracy is not completed in the running of an election or the presence of a constitution; rather, a country can have more or less democracy, “depending on the amount and quality of public participation in decision making and rule” (Booth and Seligson 1989, 12).

Representation and Accountability

As democracy has expanded in the Americas, questions are arising about the representivity accountability, and legitimacy of CSOs, in addition to that of their governments. Throughout the research, officials asked:

- Who do civil society organizations represent: a foreign foundation, a national government or advocacy group, a local membership?
- Have local organizations earned the right to represent that local constituency or do they simply work on their behalf without their explicit permission?
- What is civil society and who does it include?
- How are civil society organizations held accountable?

Clearly, these are serious questions. By what criteria can one group claim legitimacy in an international process? Membership, of course, is one attribute, but even in “clear cases,” representation by membership-based groups has been called into question. Referring to such difficulties, one Canadian government official stated:

It is easier to determine [representivity and legitimacy] when it comes to certain groups, like unions, for example. But even there, it can be difficult since it is hard to determine whether the workers want the unions representing them beyond the workplace. In the same way, you have the question of whether the union members want their dues used for political purposes. Still, it is true that unions have a legitimacy that self-elected groups don't have.

What about organizations that are not membership-based? Governments are hesitant to pull these groups into consultation processes because it is difficult to determine for whom they speak and to whom they are accountable.

Yet the goal of consultation in a democratic process need not only be representation; it may simply be to hear from as many varied perspectives in society as possible. The issues of accountability and representivity are then not as problematic. There are numerous academic research centres, public policy groups, or *sur place* CSOs, for instance, that may be legitimate contributors due to their expertise or base knowledge but are not accountable to a membership. Other CSOs that lack a membership can make valuable contributions due to their specific base or field knowledge. Finally, there are environmental CSOs that claim to speak on behalf of the planet and future generations.

Political Concerns

Regional Dynamics

Debates in the Americas, including the debates about CSO participation, take place against the backdrop of a regional political dynamic. A few aspects of that dynamic are worth highlighting, with the most obvious being the enormous power differential between the United States and the other nations of the region. Indeed, one distinguished inter-American scholar reflected on this relationship, stating that: “Much of the modern history of US-Latin American relations can be interpreted in terms of the efforts of the United States to legitimate and exercise its power in the region, and of the Latin Americans to constrain and cope with it” (Vaky and Muñoz 1993, 31).

In addition, officials often count the Caribbean bloc as another important part of the dynamic. Comprised of 13 English-speaking Caribbean states, though its members are small and of limited economic and political power individually, the bloc exercises a considerable degree of collective power. The bloc’s supportive stance on participation has been a significant factor, particularly in the OAS where each country is accorded the same status. The Central American countries also form a group, as do the South American countries plus Mexico.

While these groups often act in concert, tensions do exist. Brazil, for example, is part of the Southern cone and a partner in Mercosur (the sub-region’s trade group); however its size and global reach allow it considerable political autonomy. Mexico often plays a leadership role, an important factor for this review because it has frequently been hostile to CSO involvement.³ Since the OAS works on the basis of consensus initiatives, it can only move as fast as its slowest member.

Finally, Canada’s increased profile, marked by its accession to OAS membership in 1990, has also affected the politics of the region. Canada has been credited with diffusing the traditional tensions between the United States and the other member states, and, due to its historical relationship with the English Caribbean, it has also served as a bridge to the rest of Latin America.

US Leadership

It is both an advantage and disadvantage that the United States has been one of the strongest supporters of CSO inclusion. Its historic regional role necessarily has an impact on the way its policy ideas are viewed; indeed, recent openness to CSO participation by other OAS governments is attributed to Canada’s joining with the United States, with crucial backing from the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. As one official notes: “If the US alone was pushing the CSO agenda forward, there would be the perception that this is just another cycle of the United States controlling events in the hemisphere.” The words of another seasoned observer on the subject were more pointed: “Canada can advocate for democracy and it appears genuinely pro-democracy and pro-civil society participation, unlike the US which, because of its past use of the Organization as a political bully pulpit, Latin Americans perceive as preachy, pushy, and didactic.”

Foreign Dominance

Another political problem arises from perceptions of CSOs' foreign dependence. The identity of their partners and funding sources can taint CSO work in the eyes of many governments. One OAS insider signalled this "historical" source of government suspicion regarding CSO participation:

It is a dirty word to some governments because they associate [civil society] with subversive elements that had mobilized against governments in the era of dictatorships. Fifteen years of democracy has not wiped out the memory of what these groups stood for and the fact that they were fighting against the State. Some are worried about who they will be dialoguing with. Sendero Luminoso? The Ford Foundation?

Finally, references to the political intentions of US foundations are common. There is a deep mistrust of these private philanthropic agencies because, according to some governments, their funding has allowed many CSOs to flourish over the last two decades. Governments question CSO independence, arguing that if a non-governmental organization (NGO) is dominated by Northern funding, it may be furthering the interests of Northern states. While some go so far as to accuse CSOs of being instruments of foreign governments, others are simply uncomfortable with an outside institution holding the purse strings, and potentially calling the shots, of a local group engaged in advocacy work.⁴

Multilateral Motivation

Despite the multilaterals' many concerns about CSO participation, relationships between these two sets of actors have been deepening. This rapprochement has been supported by forces within the OAS and the summit processes. Key actors who have been advancing CSO participation include, among others, the Permanent Representatives to the OAS of Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and the United States. In addition, the Office of Summit Follow-up at the Organization of American States has been especially supportive. Still, while some argue that transparency and inclusion are core democratic principles that must embrace CSOs and that CSOs bring value to discussions and debates, others remain skeptical.

The Winds of Change

Greater openness to CSOs has come with the new winds blowing through the hemisphere's multilateral processes. This has been true for the OAS since 1990. With the Cold War over, the OAS has been trying to find a new *raison d'être*. As one staff person put it, the OAS "could no longer be just a club for governments." Transparency and accountability have become part of the organization's new lexicon, and bringing civil society into its halls reinforces those commitments. "To have credibility and legitimacy you have to have people involved," was the way another staff member expressed the shift.

The same can be said for the slow but steady incorporation of civil society input into the hemispheric summits and FTAA negotiations. Not too long ago, presidential summits and trade negotiations involved only high-ranking diplomats and technical specialists. Today, however, the region's trade ministers have created a Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society that has been given the task of receiving input from civil society organizations. The summit process has yet to develop an institutionalized mechanism for CSO participation, although, the Special Committee on Inter-American

Summits Management (CEGCI, for the Spanish *Comisión Especial de Gestión de Cumbres Interamericanas*) has recently provided a space for civil society input, as will be discussed later. Still, up until now each summit has attempted to include the views of CSOs, with varying degrees of success.

Changing Perceptions

One reason for the OAS' increasingly welcoming stance is its need to revitalize its own role and relevance in the hemisphere. For decades, it was bypassed by member states, the media, and the citizens of the hemisphere. This was partly because it was perceived as inefficient, unwieldy, and patronage-ridden, and partly because it was seen to be accountable only to the US anticommunist agenda. One OAS ambassador argues that CSOs can help transform this perception:

CSO participation can rebuild the legitimacy of the OAS and re-energize it, bringing in fresh air and fresh ideas regarding the traditional issues of democracy, human rights, poverty. Of course this position isn't very popular; most actors don't even want to hear this, let alone take up such a position . . . But, by solving problems, the OAS will acquire legitimacy since it will actually be providing solutions to the hemisphere's problems . . . CSO participation shows the public that the OAS is working with relevant actors in the different sectors of society [women, the environment] . . . this strengthens the Organization and boosts its legitimacy with the general public. How the OAS responds to the range of issues that arise in the new millennium will show how relevant it is and legitimate it.

Replacement of Services

Of course, governments and multilateral agencies are also looking for cost-effective and efficient ways of providing services to citizens. Contracting out to CSOs is proving to be one avenue for achieving this goal. In an era where government functions are being farmed out, a utilitarian interest in the involvement of CSOs has grown. In the words of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB):

The change in the role of the State involves a transfer to citizens of the responsibilities for production and services and for the control of and participation in public administration. The responsibilities of which government divests itself may be taken up either by the private entrepreneurial sector or by civil society organizations as organized expressions of citizen involvement in different areas of society (IDB 1999, 17).

There are, however, repercussions from this downloading. As CSOs become more skilled at delivering services and acquire even greater expertise, they will attempt to influence policy related to those services. This natural progression makes some multilateral officials uncomfortable.

There is another more curious consequence of the downloading of services to CSOs: an emerging sense by governments that they must compete with these new actors. Some CSOs are popular with the donor community, forcing governments to bid alongside CSOs for funding, often losing to the CSOs' reputation for efficiency. One ambassador made this point when he reflected on the 80 per cent of international

assistance channelled through CSOs following Hurricane Mitch. As a result, he argued, “the government was able to do very little to address the devastation left by the storm.” Thus, rather than seeing the state attend to their needs, citizens saw a panoply of local and foreign CSOs as their salvation. The impact on perceptions of state legitimacy was enormous.

Diffusion of Pressure

Because governments and multilateral organizations are under increasing scrutiny, the inclusion of civil society voices partly alleviates public concerns over accountability and legitimacy. One CSO staff person suggested that by including organizations like her own in discussions, multilaterals can dispel, or at least dull, the sharp criticism leveled at them.

Policy lines [referring to the Washington Consensus] are not working and multilaterals are getting a lot of criticism. They are looking for ways to dispel that criticism and one way is to let us in the door . . . It’s all about diffusing opposition, in particular placating the environmental and labour movements up here [in the North].

CSO Motivation

Civil society organizations cite a number of reasons for their interest in multilateral processes. Paramount is the “globalization” of their core concerns, particularly in the areas of the environment, labour, and trade. However, this leap to the multilateral level has been made amidst a good deal of internal debate and trepidation.

New Priorities

Many CSOs working at the multilateral level are phenomenally busy. Advocating at the local and national level is already taxing; moving up yet another rung in the chain of governance brings added work and inconvenience. Why bother then? The representative of one Washington-based CSO offered this observation:

Twenty years ago nobody was interested in these agreements, but with the power of huge organizations like the WTO [World Trade Organization] and other multilaterals, we have started to think about questions of democracy and the fact that national governments are being bound by international rules, which then makes them fiddle with national laws or priorities. You can vote governments in and out but once you accede to an international agreement, it’s incredibly difficult to get out of. So people are very wary about ceding authority to rules that they have no way of rescinding or changing.

Another representative was even more succinct: “The stakes are just too high to disengage.”

Added Benefits

Despite the strains to CSOs, the leap has yielded benefits. The representative of a Chilean CSO argued that by engaging at this level, her organization had increased its status and legitimacy, not only among governments but also among funders. Other CSOs pointed to the importance of the networks that grew out of hemispheric activity in alleviating the isolation felt by many groups and in sharing the experiences of their counterparts in other countries. “Engaging at the multilateral level enhances our knowledge about issues,” was the way one women’s organization put it. Working at the multilateral level has encouraged CSOs to forge alliances and consequently improve their own analysis and impact.

Organizational Issues

Reinventing Organizational Wheels

Today, the engagement with civil society organizations occurs in a haphazard fashion, due partly to the complexity of multilateral processes and structures in the region. While the OAS is an organization, the Summits of the Americas are a sequence of loosely connected processes, each ad hoc in nature. Three summits—Miami (1994), Santiago (1998), and Quebec City (2001) — were hosted and organized by different countries, each with their own way of dealing with civil society participation. The Bolivia Summit Conference on Sustainable Development was a specialized summit meeting and a distinct process as well. Further, while the FTAA negotiations are intimately connected to the summit process, they have been treated separately. Consequently, overlapping institutions and processes have developed separate mechanisms for the participation of civil society bodies. The mechanisms considered in this report—the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development, the FTAA, and the mechanisms used at the three summits—are sometimes linked and sometimes distinct (for the moment, at least).

A number of problems emerge as a result of this dichotomy. First, if CSO inclusion mechanisms are devised separately, there is the real danger that these mechanisms may employ contradictory standards for inclusion. Second, by pursuing the same goal in numerous places, organizations are not using resources efficiently. Finally, the research and analysis involved in creating a mechanism for CSO input is unlikely to be shared if these processes are being devised separately. Given the importance of CSO inclusion, cross-organizational efforts may well be necessary.

Organizational Process

Consulting with CSOs and responding to those consultations has made some officials uncomfortable. With the thousands of CSOs that exist in the region, multilateral processes could be bogged down if all seek to participate. One official noted, for example, that some of the governments sitting on the FTAA’s Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society expressed concerns about the number of submissions the FTAA’s Invitation to Civil Society initiative might generate. Indeed, there was resistance to sending out the invitation to CSOs to submit their views in writing for fear that the committee would be swamped with responses. The same official noted that this concern explained why no plan was developed to deal with the received submissions (the absence of such a process was a major criticism by CSOs).

Concerns over gridlock are not new, but they tend to be far more prevalent at the national level, where civil society groups, at least in the United States, have been participating in politics for a long time. Indeed, US journalist Jonathan Rauch recently coined the term “demosclerosis” to describe the paralysis that affects democracies where participation by a multitude of CSOs can block policy initiatives (Rauch 1994). Yet, given the recent interest of and about CSOs in the OAS and the summits, gridlock is unlikely to be a problem in the near future.

Mechanisms

Both CSOs and multilaterals agree that developing mechanisms for consultation and participation is a difficult undertaking. Both have singled out issues they consider important to the process and to the development of a mechanism for carrying it out. Multilaterals point to the debate over whether, and if so, how, consultations should take place. Civil society organizations focus on the need for better information to be more freely circulated if any participation is to be effective; for clear and transparent procedures; and for financial support for smaller CSOs.

The Nature of the Issue

The likelihood of winning a seat at the table depends very much on the agenda. Officials have been far more open to consultation with environmental groups and Indigenous Peoples, where public support for the issues they represent is strong and where their counsel is respected. This relative openness has been less forthcoming on controversial issues such as trade and terrorism, for a number of reasons. Trade is often associated with specific expertise, and officials are more sceptical about the value of civil society participation. Moreover, issues of finance and trade have traditionally had a certain cachet attached to them, as well as an atmosphere of secrecy.

The links between trade and social impact made by many CSOs are another area of controversy. As one former CSO director explains, some organizations want more than consultation: “they also want to make trade agreements subject to overriding health, environmental, human, and labour rights agreements . . . they want the latter to have the clout in implementation that trade and investment agreements have grabbed for themselves.” One transnational coalition, the Hemispheric Social Alliance, presented a paper on “social exclusion” to the region’s trade ministers at the November 1999 Trade Ministerial Meeting in Toronto, arguing that:

The issues raised in our paper on social exclusion are unfortunately not addressed in the FTAA talks. Some of them have been discussed in the meetings organized by the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), quite separately from the discussion on the FTAA. Yet we feel strongly that liberalization of trade and investment cannot be separated from the goals of “strengthening democracy,” “eradicating poverty and discrimination,” and “guaranteeing sustainable development,” all of which were agreed upon by the 34 nations of the Summit of the Americas, in Miami, in 1994 (Hemispheric Social Alliance 1999, 5).

The negotiators’ response has been that trade negotiations cannot possibly deal with a slate of other issues;

they argue that the process is complex enough without including a whole set of other politically volatile problems into the mix (Feinberg and Rosenberg 1999, 277-78).

The issue of terrorism has also proven to be an exceptionally prickly one. According to Canadian CSOs, Ottawa failed to consult with them on the drafting of the new OAS Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism, intended to prevent the financing of terrorism, toughen border controls, and strengthen cooperation between the region's law enforcement agencies. It is not clear whether other countries in the region consulted with civil society representatives on the matter, but it seems unlikely if a CSO-friendly country like Canada did not. Still, there is little doubt that human rights CSOs would have appreciated having input into the process, given that many recently submitted their views to the United Nations regarding a similar convention.⁵ Thirty of the 34 OAS member states approved the Convention Against Terrorism at the Organization's General Assembly meeting in Barbados this June.⁶

Nevertheless, the levels of access and influence for Indigenous groups have been encouraging. In 2001, they were able to have the words in the title of the proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, changed from "indigenous populations" to "indigenous peoples." This had been resisted by some governments because of the implication the term "peoples" could have in international law. Also, on the first reading of the Declaration, representatives of Indigenous Peoples persuaded governments to include an article on self-determination, a subject that had, hitherto, been avoided. While the content of a "self-determination" article remains to be debated, placing the issue front and centre represents an important advance for these groups.⁷

The relative success of Indigenous Peoples can be attributed to both conjuncture and context. The principle of self-determination has recently become acknowledged by practically all states. Governments also recognize there are obligations to Indigenous Peoples which flow from this right to self-determination. The OAS is, therefore, catching-up to other international organizations such as the International Labour Organization, which has adopted a Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (ILO 169), and the UN, which has been developing a draft declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples for some time now.

Institutional Knowledge

Another consideration is the organizational culture and operating procedures of a given multilateral body. After all, the multilateral policy arena is new to many CSOs, and many are uncertain how and where to intercede effectively. The learning curve is steep. Moreover, according to one CSO member, there are unpredictable levels of transparency that vary according to the issue, the department, and the person in charge, making it difficult to plan a work agenda. Another asserts that trying to influence these organizations has been "a frustrating, horrible ordeal." At least at the national level, she explains, "you usually know why things are stalled, or moving slowly. There you don't. And the hidden agendas are even more hidden in these organizations." There is an obvious need for clearer policy channels and procedures.

Information

Another key to effective participation is access to information. According to one trade group, there is not enough of the right kind of information:

Access to information is a huge obstacle. There are millions of reams of paper in my office . . . Most of the time, though, it is not what we care about . . . We can't get the time and place of a meeting or the name of the head of a negotiating group but we can download thousands of documents full of information that we can't use.

Almost all the CSOs interviewed flagged this issue as crucial to their ability to participate. The need for timely, convenient, and inexpensive access to relevant, up-to-date information—at a minimum, minutes of meetings, upcoming agendas, schedules of meetings, position papers, and formal reports—cannot be over-emphasized.

The most promising development regarding access was the release of the FTAA draft negotiating text following the Quebec City Summit, and a promise by governments to release future texts. According to some CSOs, because the document was heavily bracketed (indicating the areas where countries remain in disagreement), its release symbolized a recognition of the need for greater transparency, rather than a real commitment to keeping CSOs apprised of developments at the negotiating table.

Criteria

One of the biggest challenges in devising participation mechanisms is establishing criteria for participation. The concept of “civil society” is not only philosophically ambiguous, but also politically controversial. Some CSOs, for instance, want to ensure that access is not given to organizations that have been created by governments. As one CSO staff member noted: “We want to make sure that a group is really independent and not government-created in order to push a government agenda.”

From the perspective of multilaterals, there are a myriad of organizations in the Americas, most of them unknown. Their goal is to find technically competent and politically unthreatening groups to help implement the organization's agenda, leaving government officials with a complicated and time-consuming triage operation.

Funding and Costs

Financing is also a significant factor in CSO involvement. Some CSOs, particularly those from developing countries, do not have the resources to participate in meetings where international policy debates take place. The summit process has already acknowledged this concern: the Santiago Plan of Action requested that the IDB develop financial mechanisms to strengthen civil society and public participation. Consequently, the IDB established a Foundation of the Americas to strengthen CSO competence and input (although the initiative is aimed only at service-providing CSOs, specifically ruling out support for “advocacy initiatives”).

One OAS official felt that technology (real-time conferences on the Internet, as well as websites to distribute information) could potentially make a large contribution toward widening participation, especially for CSOs

with few resources. These tools are already employed by international organizations, including the OAS. As one CSO representative pointed out, however, while technology is a useful tool, a recent study conducted by Oxford Analytica revealed that there are only about eight million Internet users in Latin America. For cash-strapped local organizations, technology is unlikely to replace the need for face-to-face meetings anytime soon.

Access

Access to key officials and government representatives has also been flagged by CSOs as crucial to the success of consultations. Multilaterals have recognized this impediment, but have made uneven moves to address the issue. Members of the Americas Business Forums, for instance, have far greater access to trade and finance ministers than do any of the participants in the parallel civil society processes. According to summit expert Robin Rosenberg, in May 1996 in New Orleans:

The Council of the Americas and two Inter-American business groups . . . organized a Private Sector Forum on the day before the Ministers' meeting. The forum included . . . a round table meeting between the Finance Ministers and private sector representatives, chaired by IDB President Enrique Iglesias. In addition to hearing the recommendations from the private sector workshops, the Finance Ministers also witnessed a frank and open exchange of viewpoints on the challenges of hemispheric economic integration (Rosenberg 1996, 9).

Still, Rosenberg points out that despite the private sector's privileged access, it too has been frustrated with the quality of access it has received, highlighting that not all access is necessarily meaningful.

As the later section on the FTAA argues, other CSOs have considerably less access to the region's decision-makers. A hopeful sign, however, did occur at the Toronto Trade Ministerial Meeting in November 1999, where, for the first time since the launching of the FTAA, 20 trade ministers met with non-business CSOs for an hour to hear their views on integration. This sort of encounter was repeated at the Quebec Summit in April 2001, when officials held a meeting with numerous CSO representatives to hear their views on summitry. While ceremonial rather than substantial in nature, the meetings signalled that governments considered CSOs a force to be reckoned with.

Relevant Skills

Finally, while CSOs are demanding the right to participate, some groups may not be equipped to participate even after access is assured. Some admit they have been fiercely focused on the struggle to gain access to those insider policy circles, with little time or energy to research and devise the policies they would advocate once they win access, nor the resources needed to invest in that work. One CSO staff member expressed the concern that, "once you're inside, the skills involved are negotiating skills. Very few CSO staff have those skills." Still, an increasing number of CSOs in the areas of trade, gender, and the environment are developing a substantial knowledge base, as well as the skills necessary for advancing their positions in negotiation processes.

The Americas' Mechanisms for Engagement

These broad issues are rooted in a recent and conflict-ridden history of engagement. In this section, accounts of the OAS, FTAA, and the Summits of the Americas are detailed, culminating in some reflections regarding future action.

The OAS: Consultative Status for CSOs

CSO participation in OAS activities and meetings is not new; they have been sharing information in meetings and collaborating on projects for a long time.⁸ OAS agencies dealing with human rights, the environment, and community development have both formal and informal relations with CSOs. In turn, CSOs are permitted to attend most OAS meetings as observers or special guests. Until recently, however, specific guidelines on the scope and nature of CSO participation in OAS meetings did not exist, and procedures that clearly set out criteria for participation and outlined the associated responsibilities and obligations were absent. The Americas Summit Process pushed and prodded the OAS into seeking greater and more institutionalized civil society input. As a result, the OAS established a set of guidelines addressing these issues in late 1999. The trajectory of this initiative is recounted below.

An Opening

The OAS mandate to work with other international organizations, as well as “national and international entities,” has its origins in the Organization’s 1948 Charter. In 1971 the OAS General Assembly briefly revisited the mandate when it approved a revised set of standards on relations with non-governmental organizations, but the issue did not land again on the OAS’ agenda until 1990, when Canada joined. The new member arrived packing a huge reform agenda with a strong emphasis on democracy and human rights. By 1994, Canada was able to garner support for a Working Group to Study the Possibility of Granting Status to Nongovernmental Organizations in the OAS. After two and a half years, the group decided that the guidelines in use since 1971 and the somewhat ad hoc approach to CSO involvement were adequate. The reform effort failed.

According to OAS sources, the official reason for this failure was in part because governments felt that there were no cases where interested CSOs had not managed to make themselves heard or influential, hence there was no real need for change. Unofficially, the explanation was that it was impossible to reach a consensus among member states on what changes should occur. According to one OAS official, proof lay in the doubling of the Working Group’s timeline to accomplish their task—two years, twice as long as usual for this sort of work. Still, the Working Group made the following recommendations: prepare draft guidelines for relations between CSOs and the Organization (due at the end of 1999); devise criteria for CSO accreditation; formulate steps for improving relations between the Organization and CSOs; and create a register of CSOs that have relationships with the OAS.

Following the Working Group’s report, a number of changes moved the CSO debate forward. According to one OAS ambassador, three points stand out. First, the General Assembly of the OAS took on a

“different appearance.” A greater emphasis on dialogue between ministers rather than the more traditional pro-forma speeches was evident, as well as a loosening of processes that made discussions much more productive.

The second factor was the work of a small group of member states that called themselves the Friends of Civil Society. Recalling that the Santiago Summit Plan of Action had indicated a continued role for civil society, this group believed the OAS should move beyond the status quo. Rather than taking this initiative to the floor of one of the committees, however, the group decided to broker an agreement beforehand. Argentina, Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and the United States, among other pro-CSO states, invited some of the more recalcitrant states, such as Mexico and Peru, to join in discussions. Following several meetings, an agreement was finally reached to use guidelines of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) as a template for the new OAS guidelines. The rationale was that since all OAS member states had already agreed to these guidelines at the United Nations, the resolution would be unlikely to fail at the June 1999 General Assembly in Guatemala.

Finally, the ambassador noted that the presence of CSOs at the November 1999 Working Group Meeting on the Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also had the effect of softening opposition to CSO participation. The ambassador singled out the eloquent speech of the representative of the Canadian Assembly of First Nations as particularly important. The speech was so well received that it helped make government officials more open to further participation.

Guatemala: The OAS General Assembly

Once the draft set of the guidelines was devised, it was appended to a resolution approved by the Permanent Council and then by the General Assembly at its June meeting in Guatemala. The resolution also established an important new Committee on Civil Society Participation and charged it with following up on the guidelines. Although the resolution was approved, the implementation was delayed until the end of December, when further recommendations were due.

Prior to Guatemala, at meetings in Washington where the resolution was drafted, member states had still been at loggerheads. The biggest concern was the section referring to those OAS meetings that should be open to civil society participation and how that participation would take place. There were also questions about the financing of the Committee on Civil Society Participation to be created by the resolution, and about geographical representation among CSOs (the fear was that only the larger lobby groups based in Washington would make use of the access). Friction over these issues led governments to attach the December date to the resolution. According to one Caribbean ambassador, the passing of the resolution, despite the delay, was a diplomatic feat given the resistance of certain governments to specify any date at all.

Some CSOs had been monitoring the matter of accreditation from early on, providing comments on successive drafts approved in Guatemala. One group, the NGO Working Group on Civil Society, was created in November 1998 by the Esquel Foundation to monitor OAS reform in general, with particular emphasis on the OAS’ relationship with civil society. Its concerns regarding the guidelines were numerous.

As already noted, access has been an issue of prime importance to CSOs. The OAS had insisted until the last minute that only membership-based CSOs (those receiving a majority of funding from their members) be granted access, thus excluding a large number of organizations with important expertise. This dispute was eventually resolved with a Canadian amendment that would permit access to non-membership-based organizations that supplied a list of their funding sources. The guidelines stipulate that CSO participation will not be automatic in all OAS instances: CSOs will be granted access to meetings of the Permanent Council but their presence in any other meetings will be decided by the agency, unit, body, or committee in question.

While countries like Canada and the United States are not fully satisfied with the guidelines, they pushed to have them approved, arguing that further discussion would be unlikely to change the outcome, and might make matters worse. The current guidelines are not carved in stone, and it is part of the mandate of the new Committee on Civil Society Participation to review them periodically.

In sum, CSOs may now officially participate in different parts of the OAS. The *Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in the Activities of the OAS* allow CSOs to apply for accreditation while the Committee on Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities makes recommendations on eligibility for accreditation.⁹ Meetings at the Organization's headquarters in Washington devoted to corruption, Indigenous rights, and gender issues, among other OAS priorities, are increasingly being attended by NGOs, advocacy groups, and think tanks.

OAS General Assembly Meeting, Windsor (June 2000)

While human rights and social policy CSOs have regularly followed OAS developments, including proceedings at its yearly General Assembly meetings, CSOs interested in trade, for the most part, have not. Their indifference wavered, however, in June 2000, when OAS foreign ministers met in Windsor for their annual meeting. Many unions and workers' rights activists began to recognize the organic links between the FTAA and the OAS, and the overall political context — the growing momentum of the anti-corporate globalization movement — focused additional attention on the Windsor meeting.¹⁰

The formal agenda for the Windsor meeting was human security and democracy. The goal was to consider themes (or "baskets") for the upcoming April 2001 Quebec City Summit. Although officials stressed that trade was not officially on the agenda, the foreign ministers were expected to do some preliminary work in the trade area in anticipation of the summit. Moreover, while the theme of Prime Minister Chrétien's opening speech was information and technology, he devoted a large portion of his remarks to the benefits of free trade.¹¹ Not surprisingly, the FTAA-oriented CSOs that attended were also there to talk about trade. As a Canadian labour leader explained:

We have always been active on resisting trade agreements that enshrine the rights of corporations and ignore basic human and trade union rights and Windsor will be part of our tradition of fighting back against that corporate agenda.

The Canadian government expected a large civil society contingent to attend the meeting and related activities — most of them critics of the FTAA. Following in the tradition of the 1998 Santiago Summit,

CSOs organized a number of counter-meetings, parallel conferences, rallies, and teach-ins. Canada's Rights and Democracy and the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy co-hosted a symposium on *Hemispheric Integration and Democracy in the Americas* during the General Assembly meeting (June 3-5, 2000); while the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA) organized a special seminar dedicated to human rights.

In the end, only 5,000 of the expected 35,000 anti-poverty activists, environmentalists, and human rights and labour activists took part in rallies and activities. And although Canadian CSOs were well represented, those from Latin America were few in number (Korzeniewicz and Smith 2001). Regardless of the numbers, protestors were able to get their message out. More than the usual number of reporters had attended the Windsor meeting expecting to encounter massive, potentially violent demonstrations by anti-globalization forces. Instead they were met by a small well-organized contingent of CSOs pressing for the incorporation of labour, environmental, gender, and social concerns into the FTAA. Lacking chaos and disturbances to focus on, the media covered the message of protestors.

The OAS and the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development

The OAS' work on civil society consultation does not only include guidelines for participation. Another important OAS project, underway for three years, was recently adopted by the Organization's Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CEPCIDI). The Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (ISP), which is housed in the OAS' Unit for Sustainable Development, is aimed at promoting the participation of CSOs in sustainable development.

As noted earlier, OAS efforts to increase CSO participation were spurred by the summit process. Mandates from the Miami Summit (1994), the Bolivia Summit Conference on Sustainable Development (1996), and the Santiago Summit (1998) were instrumental in encouraging the current openness. In fact, the OAS' principal efforts came out of instructions from the Bolivia Summit. At that meeting, the region's heads of state asked the OAS to help governments become more participatory in their practices. As a direct result, the OAS' Unit for Sustainable Development (USD) began to develop a concrete strategy for government-CSO engagement, supported by the United Nations Environment Program, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), among others.

The goal of this ISP has been to promote effective and responsible public participation in projects as well as in policy discussions at the OAS, particularly around environmental and sustainable development decision-making. The ISP has two parts: a policy framework and a set of recommendations for action. The framework sets out the principles for consultation, including inclusiveness, responsibility, comprehensiveness, access to information, and transparency, as well as recommendations on how these principles can be turned into action (the need to find legal frameworks, better communication mechanisms, and funding for participation are highlighted as necessary first steps). The USD coordinated the process, presiding over three years of meetings aimed at finalizing the policy framework and having it approved by

the hemisphere's governments and environmental CSOs.

Drafting began in January 1998. One year later, draft consultation kits were widely distributed for comment. Consultations took place during the last two weeks of August 1999. In September, CSOs and governments met in Mexico to finalize and approve the framework and recommendations, however, many CSOs felt that there had not been enough time for a proper consultation. The ISP was finally approved two months later in December 1999. The commitment of countries to advancing participatory sustainable development was reflected a few months later when, in April 2000, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development of the OAS issued a resolution approving the ISP. In this resolution, member states adopted the ISP, showed their commitment to integrating ISP principles and recommendations into their own national action plans and programs, and instructed the General Secretariat of the OAS to support their efforts to implement it.¹²

Despite the delays—an irritating side-effect of any consultation process—the ISP has been an important benchmark for the OAS. “Where we are now would have been unthinkable even a year ago,” commented one human rights advocate. An official following the process agrees, suggesting that this is a huge step for “an organization made up of governments who have tended to view civil society generally as opposition to government.” OAS member states have since asked the Unit to design and execute an ISP implementation support program.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas: A Toe in the Door

Despite the highly technical and closed nature of the negotiations, CSOs have expressed a deep interest in influencing the FTAA negotiations. Indeed, many CSOs see consultations on trade matters as the most crucial and worthwhile use of their time and resources. As a result they have “mobilized intensely around the periodic meetings of trade ministers” as well as the presidential summits. These groups are concerned about the potential impact of the FTAA on development, democracy, the environment, health, human rights, labour rights, and the rights of women.

Of course, the starting point for CSO involvement in trade liberalization must be traced to events prior to the First Summit of the Americas in Miami. The 1989 Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) and the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) were precursors to the summit's trade agenda, and both events were training grounds for many of the CSOs now involved in the FTAA.

An Opening

At the Miami Summit, the region's leaders (except for Cuba's), agreed that their trade ministers would meet periodically to complete negotiations for the FTAA hemispheric trade agreement by the year 2005. CSOs have attended every trade ministerial following the Miami Summit, albeit in a disorganized way in the beginning (labour union representatives and some activists met in Denver during the first Ministerial in 1995; in 1997, CSOs from 18 different countries assembled in Belo Horizonte, Brazil). The business sector, for its part, staged its first Americas Business Forum in Denver, during that trade ministerial. It now holds meetings just prior to every gathering of trade ministers.

By 1998 the trade ministers had established nine Negotiating Groups, each relating to a major area of the trade negotiations, plus a Consultative Group on Smaller Economies and two Special Committees. One of those committees was the Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society (CGR), first proposed by then Canadian Trade Minister, Sergio Marchi. The outcome of intense behind-the-scenes haggling, the newly forged committee was to be given the mandate of “encouraging” CSOs to provide their views on FTAA-related matters.

To their credit, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Chile, and some Caribbean countries responded to CSO pressure by attempting to establish an FTAA study group on labour and environmental issues. The idea, however, was quickly quashed by Mexico, Peru, and several Central American countries. Responding to domestic labour groups, the US followed by suggesting that an official working group, similar to those set up to address trade topics, be created for labour and environment issues. “For a long time, we had been demanding a labour forum on par with the business forum,” one US labour representative said, “but we were also pushing for a Negotiating Group on workers’ rights.” Opposition was again led by Mexico, which argued that “powerful US and Canadian lobby groups could ‘muddy’ trade negotiations, eventually leading to what amounted to protectionism” (Schmidt 1999, 2). “Even saying the words ‘civil society’ in a trade forum brings all kinds of wrath upon you,” was the observation of one trade official. So while CSOs were asking for a dialogue with trade officials, governments remained opposed.

As for Marchi’s committee (the CGR), governments exhibited strong resistance to the proposal from the beginning. They watered down the nature of the proposed consultation mechanism, specifying that the committee would only “transmit” CSO views to the trade ministers (CSOs could not provide their comments directly to the FTAA process). The committee could thus act as a filter, excluding views deemed inappropriate. Furthermore, governments specified that only “trade-related matters” presented in a “constructive” manner would be acceptable (Leadership Council 1999, 8-9). This last stipulation was to alleviate the concern of some officials that “non-trade issues” such as human rights, gender, and poverty were being brought into the trade arena. The other two committees established at the ministerial meeting were authorized “to make recommendations” related to their work, whereas the CGR was allowed only to “present the range of views for consideration by Trade Ministers.” CSOs argued that a committee that could make actual recommendations would be more likely to generate movement on issues than one that could only present an assortment of views (Feinberg and Rosenberg 1999, 688).

Just prior to the committee’s first meeting in October 1998, a large group of CSOs drafted a letter to the chair with a list of concerns. The group was chagrined that, after seven months in operation, the committee still lacked an operating mechanism and work agenda and was concerned about rumours that it had been created to act as a cheerleader for the FTAA, rather than as a space for citizens’ voices. The letter called for a number of concrete actions: “prompt access to information pertaining to the negotiations, [and] regular and formal opportunities to discuss negotiating objectives, process, terms of reference, and provisions” (Feinberg and Rosenberg 1999, 688). It closed by arguing that real participation could occur only if the opinions expressed were transmitted in a way that could potentially influence the outcome of the negotiations. In other words, soliciting comments was a beginning, but was insufficient.

The Open Invitation/Mailbox

The consultation mechanism finally developed by the committee was unveiled at its first official meeting in November 1998. Called the “Open Invitation to Civil Society,” it invited the public to submit their views on the FTAA negotiations. The invitation was placed on the FTAA website, and governments agreed to promote the invitation in each of their countries. CSOs were given five months to submit their views.

While a valiant attempt, given persistent resistance from governments, the invitation was “way below the acceptable threshold,” according to one CSO representative, and far from what CSOs had requested. The overall reaction was mixed. Some saw the initiative as a breakthrough, but most agreed that such a mechanism could not go far enough. Indeed, according to the representative of one US CSO, it was impossible to convince more pessimistic Latin American partners to submit anything to the process: without the establishment of a direct link to the negotiating groups, reasonable timeframes for consultation, and clear procedures of accountability, the initiative could become only a repository for CSO concerns, with no chance of influencing the negotiating process (Feinberg and Rosenberg 1999, 688).¹³ The idea thus earned the pejorative title of “mailbox.”

The head of a coalition of Canadian CSOs was visibly baffled, and somewhat annoyed, that their calls for participation had resulted in the establishment of the Committee of Government Representatives and its “Open Invitation”:

Yes, from the very beginning we said we wanted input . . . I’m not saying that we necessarily need to be at the table one-on-one. We never said that. We have just been saying that we want input into the substantive issues, tariffs and trade, investment—these are all issues that we can manage, issues that we are well versed in. But they came back to us with this Committee.

The narrow framing of the invitation for comments was also a problem for many CSOs. The representative of a coalition of women’s groups expressed her frustration this way:

The way they are framing what is trade-related is so narrow that we have to do incredible contortions in order to get what we’re talking about included. You have to prove something is trade-related even though trade has a huge cascading range of effects.

Finally, it had been left to each government to publicize the invitation at home. While some countries made efforts, most did not. In the end, only a disappointing 72 submissions were received, most from Canada and the United States. The greater part of the submissions came from businesses and business-related nonprofits rather than from CSOs from other sectors. The submissions were compiled and a draft report, listing the topics raised and the number of submissions per topic, was prepared for the committee’s June 1999 meeting in Miami. The concrete recommendations that were part of the submissions were not included. Even so, Mexico nonetheless found the report unacceptable; it asked that any material that was not “trade-related” be taken out of the report and that the committee itself be disbanded. (Mexico was outflanked by the US, which posted the report on its own website.) The contents of the report, as well as the fate of the committee, were not decided at the June meeting, since member states could not come to agreement on

either issue. The committee finally presented CSO submissions in a report which was presented in November 1999, at the Fifth Trade Ministerial meeting held in Toronto. The report was subsequently published on the official FTAA website.

While most CSOs acknowledge the step forward signified by the committee and its invitation mechanism, few called for its continuation or a second opportunity to “submit” their views. Months after the submissions had been filed away, a coalition of CSOs from across the hemisphere made this point when they wrote to the Chair: “we believe that it would be helpful to focus on a search for effective mechanisms of national and hemispheric consultations.”¹⁴

Trade officials had a far more positive view of the invitation mechanism than did CSOs. As one official noted: “Five years from now it will be seen as an extremely modest attempt . . . but in fact, it is a significant step forward — not a leap — but a step.” Based in part on this optimistic perspective, the decision was taken at the Toronto Trade Ministerial to retain the CGR, with Bolivia taking over as chair, and to issue a second Open Invitation for CSO input in the form of written submissions. The committee was therefore once again given the task of drafting and presenting a second report describing the range of CSO views at the following trade ministerial, to be held in Buenos Aires in April 2001.

Buenos Aires Trade Ministerial (2001)

Just prior to the Quebec Summit, the region’s trade ministers met in Buenos Aires where they agreed to complete the FTAA negotiations by January 2005. The level of CSO opposition at this particular trade meeting was unprecedented. The Argentine capital became the sight of heavily armed security forces backed by military hardware and blockaded streets. The rough reception trade officials received could be attributed, in part, to the timing of the meeting, since many CSOs had just returned from the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, where the level of mobilization had been high and the FTAA had been a heated topic of discussion. Three massive street demonstrations were organized by the principal Argentine union federations, with considerable participation from Brazilian, Paraguayan, and Uruguayan CSOs. Organizations from Canada, Mexico, and the United States also took part in the demonstrations, which were 10,000 strong.

Responding to relentless criticism from CSOs, the ministers adopted a number of measures to address the perceived lack of transparency.¹⁵ First, they declared their intention to make the FTAA draft negotiating text public — albeit not in time for the upcoming Quebec City Summit.¹⁶ In addition to the publication of the draft, they agreed to henceforth transmit CSO views about trade policy directly to the relevant trade negotiating and working groups

Many observers argue these were important victories for CSOs who had been demanding texts and negotiating reports be released, to no avail, and who had been looking for assurances that their input was indeed reaching negotiators.¹⁷ Also, by placing the draft text in the public arena, critics could theoretically scrutinize the negotiating process more closely, as one CSO representative noted: “Negotiating with a public text will make life much more difficult for trade negotiators. Critics of the FTAA are now very well versed in the arcana of trade agreements , and will be analysing the draft text and tracking the most egregious

elements as the process of ‘removing the brackets’ gets underway” (Lee 2001, 1).

Still, some CSOs indicated that they would have preferred the establishment of a clear structure for meaningful dialogue rather than these procedural initiatives. They argued that the text’s release was useful but not sufficient since the language had already been drafted, for the most part, and the countries that supported or opposed specific clauses were not identified. And while they were pleased that their concerns would now go directly to the negotiating groups, they had not received any guarantees that their submissions would be read, discussed, or integrated into the policy-making process.

Hence, trade officials believed that these concessions conveyed a commitment to transparency and greater civil society participation, while CSOs continued to denounce the secrecy surrounding the negotiations and the absence of a “true dialogue.” In the end, the text was not made available until after the Quebec Summit, although the agreement’s investment chapter was leaked just prior to the talks.¹⁸

Strength in Numbers and Diversity: The Hemispheric Social Alliance

While advocating at the national level and keeping tabs on the Committee of Government Representatives’ work, some CSOs adopted a third strategy. A continental social alliance that originated in a Mexican proposal at a forum of 700 CSO representatives in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in May 1997, has been building a network of like-minded groups from across the hemisphere. This network of labour organizations and citizens’ coalitions representing some 45 million people in the Americas includes a large number of groups and individuals whose views on trade and investment regimes have been shaped by long and bitter battles, first against the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement and then against the NAFTA. Some of these Canadians, Americans, and Mexicans have been working together since 1991. The Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) has organized two People’s Summits, which took place prior to or alongside the official summit meetings in Santiago in 1998, and in Quebec City in 2001. Both will be discussed in the following section devoted to the Summits of the Americas Process.

The goal of the HSA has been to focus a dispersed effort and transform it into a more united force to influence policymakers. Between 1994 and 1997, various social sector organizations had been working together along national lines, but there had not been much cross-border and cross-sector cooperation. According to one of the organizers, CSOs working on international economic and social issues had been experiencing a strong sense of isolation as they struggled to do advocacy work on issues that were increasingly complex and where access to information was tightly restricted. While the overarching goal of the HSA has been to act as a vehicle for input and participation, and hence to influence the hemispheric trade agenda, perhaps its greatest achievement has been to strengthen and make more coherent a hemispheric movement.¹⁹

Since the Quebec Summit, the HSA has focused on boosting opposition to the FTAA by reaching new constituencies. For instance, it launched a trans-national campaign from September 2002 to November 2003, aimed at educating and consulting with community-based organizations from across the hemisphere on the FTAA. The objectives were to educate the public and quantify the opposition to the trade accord. Educating the public involved demonstrating the links between issues directly affecting local communities

(e.g., housing, health care, labour conditions, or fair treatment of immigrant workers) and the new global rules contained in the FTAA, WTO, and bilateral free-trade agreements.

The attempt to quantify criticism of the FTAA is in part a reaction to the refusal of many governments to put the accord to national referendums or regional hearings. It also responds, to some degree, to the issue of legitimacy. Government officials have often questioned who and how many people these organizations actually represent. Hence, all campaign activities and events (popular-education workshops, public hearings, speaking tours, referendums, etc.) included ways of showing the number of people attending or participating — for instance, through union surveys of their membership and petitions presented at public events.

The Summits of the Americas Process: An Ad Hoc Strategy

Parallel to the trade and investment negotiations has been a distinct set of discussions on social development: the Summits of the Americas. CSOs with an interest in gender equity, sustainable development, education, human rights, and governance have looked to the summit process for consultation. The opportunity to influence government policy and shape the summit agenda has depended on the topic and the political climate.

While there is no official single mechanism for CSO participation, national delegations — Canadian and US — have occasionally invited CSOs to be present at discussions on agendas and follow-up. The Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) is the locus for such discussions, and is comprised of government representatives who meet regularly to keep track of previous summit commitments (other than trade) and to develop the Plan of Action for the next summit.²⁰ Another related avenue for CSO participation has been the meetings of the OAS Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management (CEGCI) which bring together governments and CSOs to exchange ideas and points of view on the proposed themes of upcoming summits.²¹ The fact that trade is not discussed at these meetings explains the absence of practically all CSOs with links to the Hemispheric Social Alliance. So, while each summit is distinct and separate, all interested parties can discuss summit issues in the SIRG and CEGCI.

Because the three summits (Miami, Santiago, and Quebec City) and the Bolivia Specialized Summit Conference had their distinct processes for consultations, each is described below.

The Miami Summit of the Americas (1994)

The first Summit of the Americas in Miami was primarily an economic meeting of the region's heads of state, aimed at expanding trade throughout the Americas. Its secondary end was to serve as an opening for a US agenda to discuss democracy, state reform, narco-trafficking and corruption, and social and environmental policies. That agenda and its US leadership made the event open to CSO participation and, eventually, to a measure of their influence.

The most important factor was the role of the US host in assuring access to CSOs, both at home and throughout the process. US control over the planning process and agenda meant that its officials emphasized consultation with CSOs, part of its own policy tradition. Indeed, according to one author, "The [Miami] Summit process marked the first time that a government invited NGO representatives to participate directly in consultations with other governments" (Daly Hayes 1996, 5).

Yet, in the absence of a hemispheric mechanism, CSOs were compelled to deal with their national governments, which then filtered their submissions upward. Prior and during the tour by the US delegation, US officials suggested that their Latin American neighbours consult extensively at home to incorporate CSO ideas, a message strengthened by occasionally bringing American CSO representatives along. The reception received by CSOs on the delegation varied from lukewarm to hostile. In some cases, CSOs were allowed to take part in discussions; in others, they were allowed to meet with government officials but prevented from attending formal consultations. Brazil probably provided the coldest reception, closing all meetings but the ceremonial luncheon (Daly Hayes 1996, 5).

At home, US officials solicited the views of American CSOs through a variety of means. The White House worked with the North-South Center in Miami and a number of Latin American universities to solicit the views of CSOs on trade, the environment, development, and governance. While the aim had been to consult as widely as possible, the initiative ultimately favoured voices from academe (Korzeniesicz and Smith 2001, 15). Some US CSOs, such as the Inter-American Dialogue and the International Center for Research on Women, focused their efforts on bringing the views of their Latin American partners to the table. In Latin America, both the Ecuadoran CSO *Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano* (FFLA) and the Chilean CSO, *Corporación PARTICIPA*, served as vehicles for CSO input. The FFLA held 14 consultations in Latin America, while PARTICIPA organized Chile's national consultations. According to observers, although PARTICIPA's input did not appear to have any impact on summit planning, the FFLA's efforts were taken into consideration (Korzeniesicz and Smith 2001, 16). Moreover, certain environmental CSOs (the Audubon Society and the Environmental Law Institute) seemed to have a significant impact on the summit's agenda and final documents as well, especially in the areas of trade and sustainable development (Rosenberg and Stein 1995, iv).

Finally, the US government created a task force on each summit agenda topic, charging it with drafting the language to be presented to the governments of the region for approval. One of these task forces was devoted to civil society participation. According to one insider, the Civil Society Task Force—still active today—was one of the most industrious.²²

Once the language was drafted, and following a last round of consultations, final drafts of summit documents were sent to each country. Representatives met for one last consultation session (minus CSO representation) at the Airlie House Conference Center in Virginia. According to a former high level USAID official, CSO participation was almost bargained away a number of times in that final round: “We would be sitting there discussing the agenda — there were representatives from the Departments of State, Treasury, Labor, Energy, USAID — all arguing that the agenda was too long. A number of times people suggested that the civil society item should be dropped . . . if it hadn’t been for Richard Feinberg [the National Security Council Special Assistant to the President for Inter-American Affairs] continually putting civil society back on the table, it would have never survived the meeting.” The survival of the civil society clause was an important step forward for CSO participation in the summit process.

Those CSOs that were primarily focused on the FTAA, and which would later form the Hemispheric Social Alliance, did not take part in these consultation processes. However, their more critical stance vis-à-vis the summit process was reflected in a document produced by the Concerned Civil Society Organizations Office, an arm of the Church World Service/Lutheran World Relief, to which they signed their names.

Outcomes from Civil Society Input

Assessments of civil society influence in the First Summit of the Americas are mixed. Some have argued that CSOs did influence the meeting’s agenda since the wording of certain summit initiatives was taken “word for word” from CSO documents (Rosenberg and Stein 1995, iv). Others have been far more critical, arguing that CSO concerns were either absent from the final documents or weakly articulated.

The ardent attempts by environmentalists, led by the US NGO community to obtain strong language establishing the reciprocal linkage between trade and the environment seem to have had the opposite effect. The Declaration of Principles ended up expressing the philosophical converse to their position: that environmental benefits would trickle down from the process of integration (Rosenberg and Stein 1995, v).

In short, these more cautious observers assert that while CSOs were given the opportunity to voice their concerns leading up to the summit, many of the consultations ultimately “produced a progressive dilution of actions initially contemplated on a range of issues” (Rosenberg and Stein 1995, v).

In the end, the Miami Summit dealt with the issue of civil society engagement by arguing that it was crucial to enhancing democracy at the hemispheric level, and calling for mechanisms to expand citizen participation. This focus on democracy is reflected in the summit’s Plan of Action, which asks governments of the region to take the following steps: 1) to review their regulatory frameworks governing the actions of CSOs in order to increase their flexibility and opportunities to fundraise; 2) to increase the participation of groups that represent the most marginalized in their societies; 3) to exchange progress reports at the Bolivia Summit (two years later); and, 4) to consider the creation, at the Inter-American Development Bank, of a new civil society program. Finally, in the part of the action plan dedicated to the environment, there was a section on the need to promote citizen participation in all policy-making related to sustainable development activities. The governments of Jamaica and Uruguay were named co-coordinators of the civil society effort and given

the task of moving the civil society agenda forward.

The Bolivia Summit Conference on Sustainable Development (1996)

The Miami Summit provided a modest foundation for civil society participation, yet it was the Bolivia Summit Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia two years later, that succeeded in “raising the floor” for their involvement. A number of factors combined to make this summit conference, according to the words of one observer, “a CSO lovefest.”

The idea to hold a specialized Summit Conference on Sustainable Development came from Bolivia’s president, Gonzálo Sánchez de Lozada, an enthusiastic supporter of civil society participation. His support was a crucial factor, given the enormous influence wielded by summit hosts. Bolivia played a pivotal role in the discussions around the overall purpose of the summit, including the breadth of the definition of sustainable development. (The United States envisioned a narrower sectoral summit, focused on the environment, arguing that the Miami Summit had covered the other social “baskets” and that revisiting those items after such a short time was unnecessary. The Bolivian effort overrode those objections, and set forth a broad agenda and definition, thus opening the debate to a larger body of CSOs.)

The summit conference’s CSO-friendly nature was further strengthened by the identity of its coordinator, the non-governmental organization, World Resource Institute (WRI). Based in Washington, but directed by Bolivia, the Institute was also able to pull from a large group of environmental organizations. To craft an agenda, the Bolivian government authorized WRI to create a technical commission that brought together an eclectic group of people, including environmental CSOs, government representatives (including the United States, Canada, and Chile), a representative from the SIRG, members from other multilaterals (the IDB, the World Bank, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), and the OAS), as well as representation from USAID and the US State Department. According to one source, the group worked extremely well together and all parties were open to civil society participation from the beginning. Other observers have been less positive, arguing that the commission did not take full advantage of the CSO presence in the group, relying more on government and multilateral representation for input (Rosenberg 1996, 10). Still, the CSO representation was unusually large, so much so that some officials charged that CSOs were over-represented.

From that process, two consultation mechanisms were created to bring civil society views into the development of the agenda. The first was devised by an Ecuadorian CSO, Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA); the second was sponsored by USAID.

FFLA received funding from the governments of Canada and the Netherlands, as well as Corporación Andina de Fomento (CAF) and USAID, to carry out hemispheric-wide consultations. For the most part, one CSO per country was selected, and while rich contributions were made, the process was woefully under-funded (an average of US\$4,000 was set aside for each national consultation) (Rosenberg 1996, 10). A further difficulty was in the presentation of that input — in an unprecedented practice, the findings were presented en masse directly to the OAS in plenary. Unfortunately, with so many CSOs insisting on addressing the Permanent Council individually, the overall message was weakened. In the end, it has been

suggested that “the spirit of what was said was considered but none of the recommendations were really taken into account.”

Still, the presence of CSOs was a step forward. The meeting has been credited with showing OAS government representatives that civil society is not necessarily a menacing force. The former USAID official was moderately optimistic: “I’d like to think that the FFLA experience paved the way for what is happening now at the OAS in terms of an opening to civil society,” he said.

The second consultative process took place in parallel, organized by USAID. The straightforward strategy was to bring CSOs and governments together in one room to draft the summit language on civil society. If they could together devise language around how citizens could speak to governments and how governments could listen to citizens, the outcome would carry more weight.

Uruguay, one of the two countries charged with following the civil society initiatives coming out of Miami, agreed to host the two-day meeting in Montevideo in August 1996. Thirty-one government representatives along with a large group of CSOs attended the Hemispheric Conference on Citizen Participation in Decision-making for Sustainable Development. Funding for the gathering came from a variety of sources, including the Inter-American Foundation, Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation, and USAID. The wording related to the civil society initiative, including the important instruction to the OAS to create an institutional space where systematic consultations with civil society could take place, came out of the Montevideo gathering.

Governments did not automatically warm to the idea though. Intense lobbying was required to move the recommendation forward against arguments that CSO influence might lead to unknown consequences and that their legitimacy ought to be questioned. In the end, the recommendation was accepted, and the OAS Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (ISP) was established.

The Bolivia Conference had high levels of civil society participation because of its enthusiastic host, a CSO coordinator, and two useful mechanisms of CSO participation. Still, it was easier for CSO and government representatives to embrace each other for another reason: the subject matter. Environmental protection has generated less conflict in multilateral arenas, especially in comparison to trade and human rights, and is accepted as an arena where public involvement is often required.

The Santiago Summit (1998)

If the Miami Summit was heralded as a promising first step for civil society participation, and the interim Bolivia Conference recorded imaginative leaps forward, the next full summit meeting in 1998 in Santiago was a grave disappointment. Indeed, limited in their involvement in the official process, a large part of the growing CSO community organized a separate parallel summit, an important trend in civil society summitry.

The PARTICIPA Experiment

In the lead-up to the second summit, the Chilean Planning Ministry was charged with coordinating and managing the event. Following on the Bolivian experience, the Ministry invited a Chilean CSO, Corporación PARTICIPA, to coordinate a consultation process. With funding from its own government as well as the OAS, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Canada, PARTICIPA held two large meetings in Santiago, inspired by the success of a pre-Bolivia Summit Conference meeting.

The first meeting, in August 1997, gathered 55 civil society organizations from 22 countries to discuss education, democracy, and sustainable development. Recommendations were presented to a government meeting that fed into the planning process for the summit. The second meeting, three months later, developed recommendations on strengthening civil society, the role of women in poverty eradication, and the fight against corruption. Thirty countries were represented and 70 members of civil society organizations attended, as did many government representatives, in addition to 10 representatives from international and regional institutions.²³ Most of the participating CSOs were organizations that had previously shown a willingness to work closely and successfully with their governments; they were also a different group from those who later organized the parallel People's Summit.

As a part of the Chilean delegation, PARTICIPA then presented the recommendations from both meetings to the December 1997 meeting of the SIRG, the coordinating body that eventually determined the wording in the Declaration and Plan of Action. In the end, language on civil society that was presented became the negotiating text for that particular initiative.

The First People's Summit: Looking for a Space for Participation

The People's Summit of the Americas, in April 1998, took place just days before the official summit. Almost 2,000 civil society representatives from across the hemisphere, with no official links to the summit or its governments, met to discuss summit themes and network among themselves — a design that may have detracted from its effectiveness, according to some observers.

An international coalition, with strong representation from labour, organized the event. Many travelled to Santiago because the summit was the official launching pad of the FTAA negotiations, rather than for other issues on the agenda. Although an array of sectors was represented — Indigenous Peoples, rural producers, human rights, women's rights, social justice, and the environment — the representatives were united by concern over the impact of new trade and investment agreements on their respective sectors as well as the belief that both the summits and the FTAA lacked transparency and civil society input. Following a set of issue workshops, the organizations drafted a declaration that they delivered to the governments at the official summit.

Clearly, parallel events like the Americas Business Forum or the People's Summit cannot directly influence government deliberations, let alone the final agreements. Most of the negotiating has already been completed and the wording of official texts determined by the time the meetings open. However, such events are meeting places, as well as spaces where public opinion can be influenced via press coverage. In the case of the Santiago People's Summit, CSOs took advantage of the gathering to further consolidate the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), then in its initial stages. The HSA was officially constituted in March

1999 following the San José Trade Ministerial. When the Alliance established a coordinating committee and a secretariat, it transformed itself from an informal network of like-minded CSOs into an official forum for progressive movements from across the hemisphere.

Backsliding on Civil Society?

Thanks to the efforts of the Jamaican and Uruguayan ambassadors, the consultations and discussions that took place in the PARTICIPA meetings did have some influence on the wording of the final documents related to civil society that were presented to government leaders. At the same time, because government representatives were present in those preparatory meetings, the recommendations that emerged were necessarily compromises: a recommendation aimed at including civil society participation in the FTAA process, for example, never made it through the preparatory meetings (Seymoar 1999, 404).

Many argue that Santiago fell short on civil society participation. The access afforded civil society organizations was indeed limited, and opportunities for CSOs to inject their views into the agenda were few. Furthermore, there was no civil society representation on most national delegations, including the US and Chilean ones. Both countries had included CSOs in their Miami Summit delegations. These shortcomings go some way to explaining why CSOs felt the need to stage an alternative summit alongside the official government meeting.

Finally, the Leadership Council for Inter-American Summitry of the Americas, which has been tracking and evaluating the summitry process since Miami, made an unflattering evaluation of Santiago in its report. This negative appraisal was buttressed by the observations of the Jamaican Ambassador, Arthur Thompson, who noted a “resurfacing skepticism by some governments in Santiago to recognize civil society” (Leadership Council 1999, 8).

The Quebec City Summit (2001)

Given that Canada has been one of the strongest supporters of CSO involvement in hemispheric affairs, CSOs were expected to receive a warmer welcome in Quebec City than they had in Santiago. This air of optimism quickly dissipated after Canadian security forces, concerned about possible outbreaks of violence, completed their preparations for the event.²⁴ What came to be known in the press as “the wall of shame” (a tall reinforced chain link fence around the summit site) was viewed by the Canadian government as “a necessary precaution” and by CSOs as “provocative overkill.”

Still, during the months leading up to the summit, the Canadian government made significant efforts to encourage the active involvement of CSOs. Under Canadian leadership, the Special Committee on Inter-American Summit Management opened its doors to civil society input into summit preparations — except those regarding the FTAA. Also, the Canadian and US governments supported an NGO-driven initiative, known as “Citizen Participation: From the Santiago Summit to the Quebec City Summit,” aimed at developing a set of recommendations, through national consultations, for the summit agenda and ultimately in the Quebec Plan of Action.

The Citizen Participation project was organized and coordinated by three NGOs with previous summit experience and a good rapport with the region's governments: the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), Chile's Corporación PARTICIPA, and the United States' Esquel Group Foundation. In the end, 17 national consultations and six consultations with CSO networks, coupled with the creation of a web page to collect CSO views, yielded 243 proposals for governments to consider covering: women, corruption, civil society participation, education, sustainable development, Indigenous issues, human rights, trade, and microenterprises. The results of this consultation were presented at a meeting in Miami, Florida, on January 18-20, 2001, which assembled government representatives (the national coordinators of the SIRG, ambassadors to the OAS, and other officials involved in the summit preparations) and 75 CSOs from across the region (CSO representatives who guided the consultations in their countries, along with representatives of regional thematic civil society networks). A final report with CSO recommendations was drafted and published by Corporación PARTICIPA and released one month before the summit.

According to the architects of the Citizen Participation project, this initiative, which was funded by the Canadian government and the Inter-American Development Bank, was not meant to be representative of all CSOs; rather, it was aimed at enabling a broad range of CSOs to become familiar with summitry and to encourage participation in the summit process. In fact, the initiative did not engage an important segment of the hemispheric CSO community — namely, most CSOs belonging to the Hemispheric Social Alliance. These CSOs believed the process to be a “sham” with little true participatory value; moreover, with trade excluded from the process, they viewed it to be of little value. Their judgment was not entirely groundless. Although some CSOs tried to push FTAA issues onto the agenda, generating some heated debate, the final report barely touched on the subject.²⁵

A number of national governments also held their own official consultations prior to the Quebec meeting. For instance, in the United States, USAID, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the State Department hosted an informal consultation in Washington, DC with environmental CSOs. In Canada, a number of CSOs expressed their opinions through regularly organized information exchange sessions with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). These Ottawa-based sessions, with telephone conference connections for those unable to attend in person, focused on proposed themes for the summit's Plan of Action.

CSO views on the summit's Plan of Action were also presented at events, forums, and conferences held just prior to, or parallel to, the hemispheric meeting: the human rights NGO, Rights and Democracy, organized a Symposium on Hemispheric Integration and Democracy in the Americas; and in the US, the Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) prepared a document for release just prior to the summit dedicated to the US position regarding the FTAA.²⁶ Also scheduled to coincide with the summit was a three-day symposium on hemispheric economic integration and sustainable development co-hosted by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).²⁷

As for *tête-à-tête* meetings between CSOs and heads of governments, the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA), along with numerous other CSOs, requested a public meeting with the region's heads of state to demand greater transparency and more meaningful participation. The Canadian special representative for

the summit countered by proposing a meeting between labour groups and four Canadian cabinet ministers, including the Canadian Trade Minister. The HSA rejected the offer, which would have taken place behind closed doors rather than with full press coverage, and which would have provided access to only selected members of the CSO community.

Notwithstanding, the Canadian government organized one face-to-face event with CSOs and government officials during the summit. A roundtable discussion with some 40 civil society leaders — except for HSA members who chose not to participate — and the foreign affairs and trade ministers, as well as the heads of the regional and international organizations was arranged for CSOs to present their policy proposals directly to summit officials.²⁸ Of the CSOs that attended, most conveyed the same concerns as their counterparts who chose to remain outside the summit parameters: globalization was facilitating a process of corporate rule which was threatening democracy; the lack of transparency, public debate, and parliamentary input into the negotiating process was alarming; trade liberalization in itself should be questioned given that it has caused a wider gap between rich and poor; and national regulations in the areas of health, the environment, education, and labour could be undermined if the FTAA was to become a reality. On human rights, for example, the Honourable Warren Allmand of the organization Rights and Democracy told officials:

Rights and Democracy is not opposed to trade or free trade agreements, but we emphasize most emphatically that such trade agreements must recognize the primacy of human rights, and must be fully consistent with human rights treaties that we have already ratified. Trade law should never trump human rights law. To the contrary, trade should serve the advancement of human rights.

Just how constructive and useful the roundtable meeting was is unclear. It has been suggested that it set an important precedent which could lead to greater CSO access to ministerials and summit working groups in the future (Feinberg and Rosenberg 2001). On the other hand, because of lack of time, many CSOs were unable to make their presentations to officials and, like previous consultations, the meeting constituted a one-way discourse rather than a dialogue.

Among the most high-profile and visible of CSO-led initiatives was the second People's Summit of the Americas, held just prior to its governmental counterpart, between April 16-21, 2001. Carrying on a tradition started in Santiago in 1998, the second People's Summit was organized by two members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, Common Frontiers and the Quebec coalition, Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale (RQIC). Thousands participated in the summit's forums, workshops and symposia articulating an alternative vision of hemispheric integration. The topics of discussion included: labour, women and globalization, education, communications, human rights, agriculture, Indigenous Peoples, health, the environment, parliamentary forum, and state withdrawal and equitable redistribution of wealth. As at the first People's Summit, delegates denounced the inequitable distribution of risks and benefits associated with new trade and investment regimes, as well as the disproportional power wielded by transnational corporations in the FTAA process. Funding and some logistics support for the event were provided by the Canadian and Quebec governments.²⁹ The People's Summit culminated in a huge rally and march on April 21st, with police estimating the attendance at 25,000 while organizers stated that a figure closer to 60,000 was accurate (Lee 2001, 1).³⁰ While Cuba was not invited to the official summit, the

People's Summit made a point of receiving a Cuban delegation.

While the People's Summit was a success, observers have expressed deep concerns over the growing militarization surrounding summitry as well as the increasing tendency of some governments to criminalize social protest and political dissent. While the events of September 11th can explain to some degree the inflated levels of military and police presence at international gatherings, these trends were undeniably evident prior to the twin towers tragedy (at anti-globalization demonstrations in Seattle, Prague, Genoa, Windsor, Buenos Aires, and as far back as 1997, when Canada hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, where an expected student protest met with an unusually strong police response). Indeed, even a former cabinet minister in Brian Mulroney's conservative government, and a strong supporter of free trade, suggested in a newspaper column that the police action in Quebec City was both disturbing and exaggerated.³¹

While some CSOs felt that the summit signalled a greater commitment to CSO involvement in decision making, others were disappointed. One CSO representative stated that the most discouraging aspect of the summit was the continued lack of feedback, response, or even reference to, past CSO submissions.

We have done the research and our positions are strongly grounded. Our critiques have been carefully thought through. Yet we have received no feedback regarding our position on the issues. We would feel better if there was a recognition that our proposals are serious proposals. For consultation to be meaningful we deserve at least the courtesy of a reply — even counter arguments, or evidence showing the weaknesses or errors in our analysis, would be an advance.

Indeed, the HSA has produced detailed analyses on debt and social exclusion which elaborate an alternative approach to trade and investment policy in the Western hemisphere. These initiatives, first released in 1998 but revised since, reflect a notable intellectual effort on the part of CSOs as well as a serious attempt to move beyond critiques toward meaningful engagement with governments.³² Because government officials have refrained from engaging with CSOs around these documents, Hemispheric Social Alliance CSOs judge the most effective "consultations" so far to have taken place "on the streets." They now believe that they are more likely to affect policy through the media and street action than through any number of policy briefs they could produce and submit through "formal channels and consultations."

The Democratic Charter: Locking in Democracy?

According to some observers, the introduction of a "democracy clause" as part of the summit's Final Declaration was the single most meaningful item to come out of the Quebec meeting. Given the fragility of democracy in the hemisphere, they viewed the clause as a powerful political message. It establishes that "any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the Hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the participation of that state's government in the Summit of the Americas process." The clause (which has been recast into a charter) seeks to neutralize the customary tactics and tools of dictators, including perpetrating *auto-golpes* or "self-coups," dissolving legislatures and judiciaries, engaging in electoral fraud, and censoring or gagging the media. Its influence may be significant

since it could potentially hold the threat of exclusion from future summits — including the FTAA — over the heads of democracy violators.³³

A draft of the “Inter-American Democratic Charter” was prepared and submitted to the region’s governments six weeks after the summit, at the OAS 31st General Assembly Meeting in San José, Costa Rica. But with so little time between the summit and the meeting, a number of disagreements remained, leading foreign ministers to establish a working group charged with expanding on the draft in time for a Special Assembly Meeting in Lima, Peru, three months later. With final approval delayed until September, the working group took the opportunity to consult more fully with CSOs.

The OAS established a special website for this purpose, receiving input from CSOs between July 9 and August 10, 2001. In addition, consultations took place both within member states and at a regional level. The Canadian government held a special session devoted to the charter in July 2001, which was attended by 13 CSOs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, with logistical support from the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IHR), invited members of the general public to participate in a “Dialogue with civil society on the Inter-American Democratic Charter” on July 9-10, 2001. Forums to study and discuss the text were also held in Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Paraguay, and Peru.

Most significantly, a broad coalition of CSOs from across the hemisphere produced a “Joint alternative proposal for an Inter-America Democratic Charter,” which was presented to the OAS by the *Coordinador Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Peru*. The “alternative proposal” argued the draft charter was far too weak and ambiguous to be effective and that poorly defined terminology and ambiguous mechanisms for enforcement and evaluation could open it to subjective or arbitrary use. Also critiqued was the notion of democracy — representative democracy — being upheld in the charter, which places far too much emphasis on the institutional aspects of democracy, according to many CSOs.³⁴

A more substantial concern, however, was that only member states or the Secretary General — not citizens’ groups — could request an assessment of the democratic situation in a given country. CSOs suggested that the charter should provide protective mechanisms to all victims of democratic rights violations — not just states — arguing that because governments were often the violators of democracy and human rights, leaving investigation and enforcement solely to them would be a mistake.³⁵ CSOs proposed that a special committee of experts or the Inter-American Human Rights Commission be given the responsibility of interpreting and applying the charter. A third notable concern raised by CSOs was the lack of a provision excluding states deemed undemocratic from economic integration, or more specifically the FTAA.

It is difficult to determine how many of the points raised in CSO submissions were actually addressed by member states. Numerous groups, individuals, institutions, and academics made submissions, and an analysis of all the submissions remains to be done. However, CSOs agree that the draft was improved upon: the final draft expands the notion of democracy suspension from “sudden interruption,” which implies coups, to “alteration of the democratic order”; and an article about racial discrimination (Article 9) was added because of pressure from the International Human Rights Law Group (IHLRG) and other CSOs.

However, the more profound concern of CSOs remains: that the mechanisms for evaluating democratic

conditions and charter application are weak. Further, the absence of a clear link between the charter and the FTAA has left the question of using trade sanctions to defend democracy unresolved. Finally, some CSOs called the democracy clause a sham from the beginning: “These sorts of trade deals have already undermined our health and environmental laws. Now they will open the way to devaluing the meaning of the word democracy.” This particular CSO suggested that if governments were really serious about promoting democracy they would allow the citizens of the region to vote directly on the proposed FTAA deal through referenda.

On September 11, 2001, a final draft of the Charter was adopted by the hemisphere’s foreign ministers during the OAS special session in Lima. Not too long after, the Charter was invoked for the first time in response to the events of April 11 and 13, 2002, in Venezuela.³⁶

Conclusion

While resistance to CSO inclusion will continue, OAS governments have accepted that recapturing the confidence of ordinary citizens and carrying out successful programs requires engaging the broader public with credible mechanisms of consultation. In the years leading up to the Fourth Summit of the Americas, OAS governments will continue using the existing mechanisms for engaging with CSOs — national consultations, the OAS Guidelines for Civil Society Participation, the FTAA “Mailbox,” the OAS Special Committee for Inter-American Summits Management, and the principles developed by the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision Making for Sustainable Development (ISP).

As FTAA talks proceed, it is difficult to say whether CSOs will gain greater access to both information and negotiators. Their influence could decrease if the Bush administration wins unrestricted Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), formerly known as “Fast Track.”³⁷ US CSOs have lobbied strongly against TPA, fearful that the legislation will undermine their efforts to include environmental, public health and labour provisions in new trade pacts. Canadian CSOs have strongly critiqued their government for pursuing the FTAA in a climate of increased US protectionism. Indeed, the debate in the US Senate over fast-track resulted in the Dayton-Craig amendment, after its Senate sponsors, which would allow Congress to reject any provisions of future trade agreements that might weaken US laws dealing with unfair trade. According to some CSOs this amendment, when viewed alongside new US steel tariffs, a US law authorising billions of dollars in extra farm subsidies, and the US duties slapped on Canadian lumber, should be a warning to governments seeking inclusion in an FTAA.

The accounts of citizen participation detailed in this report highlight a few things to remember as the participation saga unfolds. First, many government officials and CSOs argue that a single cross-organization strategy for public consultation is needed. The summit process currently has two separate tracks: the FTAA negotiations on trade, and specific consultations organized by summit hosts coupled with regular meetings with the OAS Special Committee on the Inter-American Summits Management (CEGCI). At the same time, the OAS has a new set of guidelines for CSO accreditation as well as an Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development, developed by its Unit on Sustainable Development and the Environment. According to some officials and frustrated CSOs, all these processes (or aspects of them) will eventually need to be merged in the interest of effectiveness.

The principles for meaningful participation laid out in the ISP, for instance, have universal appeal. According to one analyst, the OAS' Committee on Civil Society Participation should take advantage of the three years of work that went into developing these standards and find a place for them within their own new guidelines. Indeed, all areas of the OAS — education, trade, democracy, social development and both bilateral and multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank, IDB, and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)) should adopt ISP principles and recommendations as a framework for incorporating CSO views into their efforts to strengthen democracy and build prosperity.

Second, it is clear that summit hosts have set the tone for CSO participation in the past.³⁸ Still, successful consultations will depend on a few other factors. In order to preserve the momentum around civil society inclusion, the next host must show its commitment early. Past experience suggests that participation is more effective if CSOs have a hand in drafting and developing agenda items before they are circulated to government officials, since once they have been approved by member states they are difficult to alter.

Furthermore, for a consultation to be truly fruitful, CSO input must be fed directly into the decision-making spaces. At the same time, given the high level of organization of Argentine CSOs at the Buenos Aires Trade Ministerial in 2001, these organizations will undoubtedly serve as eager and competent hosts of a third separate, parallel, People's Summit, assuming the 4th official summit of the Americas does indeed take place in Argentina. (Given the country's enormous financial problems, there has been talk of moving the event.) Canada set a precedent at the Quebec City Summit, raising the bar by providing CSOs with funding for the People's Summit and inviting them inside the summit parameter for a special roundtable discussion with government ministers. CSOs are likely to expect at least the same level of access and support from their Argentine hosts, if not more.

Third, not only must national governments consult with their own civil societies on agenda items, but they must do so in a comprehensive fashion. Unequal access will prevent any consultation or participation mechanism from yielding useful results. Besides, the reaction of the HSA to Canada's invitation to meet with only labour representatives in Quebec city reveals that CSOs will resist special treatment or actions that could jeopardize the movement's unity. The next summit host and participating governments should bear this point in mind.

As for Hemispheric Social Alliance's impact on the FTAA negotiations, its effectiveness will hinge on more than the actions and attitudes of government representatives. The movement, which has grown and matured considerably since Santiago, is just as broad and diverse as it is formidable. Labour, a key player, has traditionally operated in the same way as its adversaries (corporations), however these organizational models, often running along patriarchal and hierarchical lines, are unlikely to yield the unity needed to keep the movement strong and whole. An inclusive and consensual method of decision making is essential if such varied groups are to remain allies, but this will be difficult to implement and sustain. At the same time, it remains to be seen whether a real convergence can be consolidated between CSOs working more amicably with governments and those that reject the current mechanisms as unresponsive to democratic concerns.

In sum, CSOs are reminding multilateral institutions and individual governments that high-level international forums are now addressing issues that impact on the daily lives of citizens. As this process intensifies and the

boundary between high and low politics becomes increasingly blurred, the stakes for CSOs will increase. Moreover, CSOs are purposefully breaking down the barrier between the economic and political domain, asserting that changing one will necessarily affect the other. Many governments are slowly coming on board, as the words of one Canadian official reveal:

Social issues are definitely key to trade but it is often not seen that way . . . We have tended to view economic and social issues separately. But if you are the worker, it's your life and job and that's where trade enters the picture. The two issues have to come together . . . it's only a matter of time before the governments recognize that economic and social policies are linked.

Overall, the message is that progress will be incremental but we are headed in a more enlightened direction. These sentiments bode well for CSO participation. The words of a veteran journalist who has covered international politics for more than 30 years are also hopeful. When asked if he thought CSOs would eventually break down the door of multilateral processes such as trade negotiations, he answered with a well-known adage: "War is too important to leave to generals." CSOs would agree.

Acronyms

ART	Alliance for Responsible Trade
CAF	Corporación Andina de Fomento
CEGCI	Comisión Especial de Gestión de Cumbres Interamericanas [OAS Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management]
CEPCIDI	Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development
CGR	Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CITEL	Inter-American Telecommunications Commission
CSOs	civil society organizations
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
FFLA	Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano [Ecuadoran CSO]
FOCAL	Canadian Foundation for the Americas
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
HSA	Hemispheric Social Alliance
ICCHRLA	Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IHRLG	International Human Rights Law Group
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IHR	Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ISP	The Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development
IUCN	World Conservation Union
OAS	Organization of American States
PAHO	Pan-American Health Organization
RQIC	Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale
SIRG	Summit Implementation Review Group
TPA	Trade Promotion Authority
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	OAS Unit for Sustainable Development
USTR	United States Trade Representative
WRI	World Resource Institute

Endnotes

¹ Based on primary and secondary document research, participation in OAS, FTAA, and Summit preparatory meetings, and interviews with more than 40 officials, delegates, academics, and CSO representatives, the original paper was completed in 1999, and updated in the summer of 2002. Contributors were interviewed on a not-for-attribution basis and assured that country as well as organizational identities would not be revealed to preserve the candour and confidentiality with which views were shared. Citing without attribution was a difficult decision to make. However, given the highly sensitive nature of the topic and the reluctance of people to be interviewed, let alone go on the record, it was our judgement that presenting the opinions, reflections, and real positions of the protagonists in these debates should be the overriding goal. In view of the importance of the topic, we feel it was a necessary trade-off.

² See the Washington File, a product of the Office of International Information Programs, US Department of State. Website: <http://usinfo.state.gov>.

³ Little has changed since the election of President Vincente Fox. To be sure, Mexico forcefully insisted on hosting the FTAA North American regional seminar on CSO consultations in July 2002. This, however, does not signal a major shift in Mexico's obstructionist posture toward civil society involvement in trade talks. See Donald R. Mackay, "Challenges Confronting the Free Trade Area of the Americas," FOCAL Policy Papers, July 2002.

⁴ The government of Peru under President Alberto Fujimori went so far as to require that all foreign donors be registered and that all recipients of foreign funds submit their budgets and work plans to the government for approval. The Cuban government has asked in the past that CSOs submit similar information.

⁵ See "Comprehensive Convention Against Terrorism: A Joint Letter — Amnesty International / Human Rights Watch," January 28, 2002. www.globalpolicy.org/wtc/terrorism/2002/0128aihrw.htm.

⁶ Four nations have yet to sign. They are Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, Dominica, and the Dominican Republic. OAS officials stated these countries needed additional time to implement changes required by the treaty. The treaty, negotiated following the attacks on the United States on September 11th, requires that signatories create a financial intelligence unit and implement strict measures to detect cross-border movements of cash that could be used to fund terrorism. Countries must also agree to transfer detainees whose testimony is needed in anti-terrorism investigations, and to deny asylum or refugee status to terrorist suspects.

⁷ Less encouraging, however, was the fact that following these meetings the drafters of the Quebec City Declaration and Plan of Action used the expression "Indigenous Peoples" but added that the term "in this document cannot be construed as having any implications as to the rights that attach to the term under international law."

⁸ See OAS official document "Standards on Cooperative Relations between the Organization of American States and the United Nations, its Specialized Agencies, and Other International and National Organizations," AG/RES.57 (I-O/71). For the revisions that were made in 1971, see Standards on Cooperative Relations in AG/RES.57, Articles 13-22, which relate to relations with non-governmental organizations.

⁹ CSOs wishing simply to attend the annual OAS General Assembly need only send a letter to the Secretary General of the OAS at least 60 days in advance of each event, requesting the right to observe the proceedings under the category of "Special Guests." Finally, OAS Organs such as the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission (CITEL), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

(IICA), the Inter-American Human Rights Court, and the Inter-American Children's Institute are developing their own requirements for cooperation with CSOs. All civil society organizations with accreditation to the OAS can make presentations. For a description of the guidelines approved by the Permanent Council in December 1999, as well as the procedure for registering, see www.civil-society.oas.org.

¹⁰ Seattle-inspired protests were increasingly being aimed at all the leading institutions of global governance: the World Economic Forum, in January 2000, and the World Bank and the IMF meetings, in April 2000.

¹¹ During the Windsor meeting the foreign ministers agreed on a three-part framework for the third Summit of the Americas: strengthening democracy, creating prosperity, and realizing human potential. The first two themes have been central to the process since the 1994 Miami Summit. The third theme, realizing human potential, was portrayed as a way to address social issues and a demonstration of the ministers' commitment to inclusion and equity. Having identified the "digital divide" as a key issue for the region, Canada has added "connectivity" to the agenda. Trade and investment were addressed under the second theme, and lie at the heart of the Summit Process.

¹² The Santiago Summit also recommended that, in developing a dialogue and partnerships with CSOs, governments draw on existing initiatives that promote increased participation, such as the Inter-American Strategy for Public Participation. This recommendation was fulfilled: the ISP is now available to member states wanting to promote public participation in areas beyond the environment, such as democracy, trade, and social development, if they choose to employ it.

¹³ Some Canadian CSOs with limited time and resources were forced to make a choice about where to put their energy. The submissions to the FTAA committee were due around the same time as the country's parliamentary hearings on the FTAA. They decided that participation in the hearings would be more likely to yield results given the parameters of the committee's mechanism.

¹⁴ Private letter obtained in Washington on October 7, 1999.

¹⁵ Since the beginning, the subject of CSO access to the FTAA talks has been contentious. In fact, a US CSO (Earthjustice) "filed a lawsuit with the US District Court in Washington alleging that the US Trade Representative (USTR) failed to make public written negotiating proposals submitted to the Free Trade Area of the Americas negotiations process" (Feinberg and Rosenberg 2001). According to observers, the Buenos Aires declaration represented an attempt to respond to CSO opposition to the FTAA.

¹⁶ On July 3, 2001, the preliminary draft texts of the FTAA Agreement were made public, a first for such a negotiating document. The draft reflected the different positions of the FTAA countries in each area of negotiation.

¹⁷ For a copy of the letter from the Hemispheric Social Alliance to Dr. Adalberto Rodriguez Giavarini, Chair, Trade Negotiations Committee, see www.globalexchange.org/ftaa/liberate.html.

¹⁸ The reason for the delay, according to government officials, was the need to translate the text into the Summit's three other official languages. Regarding the leaked chapter, the US NGO, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, posted the leaked copy of the draft investment chapter on their website on April 18, 2001.

¹⁹ The movement has recovered from a brief slump immediately following September 11th. Sizable demonstrations against World Bank and IMF policies in Washington were cancelled or drastically reduced following the tragic events. Although some tensions emerged among US CSOs, with unions being far more

supportive of the President's agenda and other CSOs adopting a more critical stance, overall the movement has regained its strength and momentum.

²⁰ After the 1994 Miami Summit, the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) was created to monitor and manage follow-up and implementation on Summit agenda items. The SIRG is chaired by a small group of three countries (the "Troika"), composed of the two most recent Summit hosts (Chile and Canada) and the future host (Argentina). Representatives from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as of ECLAC and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), are invited, given their importance to any hemispheric initiative.

²¹ Organizations that have traditionally attended these meetings include: the Inter-American Dialogue, Transparency International (USA), the Carter Center, Corporación PARTICIPA (Chile), the Esquel Group Foundation, Rights and Democracy (Canada), Human Rights Watch, and the Leadership Council on Inter-American Summitry. Summaries of CEGCI meetings are distributed to the 34 National Coordinators of the SIRG.

²² The Civil Society Task Force continues today, providing CSOs with regular briefings on Summit issues, as well as a space for networking and discussions. Participants include not only CSOs, but also government agencies, multilateral institutions, foundations, academia, the media, and private for-profit organizations. The task force has been holding regular meetings since 1998, with an average of 40-45 people attending each gathering out of a total of 300 registered participants.

²³ Of course, some countries organized their own consultations. Canada, for instance, asked the non-governmental organization, Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), to organize and carry out a series of cross-Canada workshops that addressed the Summit topics. The results of these regional meetings were compiled and fed into the PARTICIPA meetings as well.

²⁴ Canadian RCMP and local authorities cordoned off the old quarter of the city with a three-metre high, 4.5-kilometre long cement and chain link fence and bolstered security with 6,000 police officers and military personnel.

²⁵ See the thorough and informative work of Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and William C. Smith, *Protest and Collaboration: Transnational Civil Society Networks and the Politics of Summitry and Free Trade in the Americas*. Coral Gables: The North-South Center, The University of Miami. 2001. Footnote 62.

²⁶ See Sarah Anderson and Karen Hansen-Kuhn, *Americas Plan for the Americas: A Critical Analysis of the US Negotiating Positions on the FTAA*. Washington DC: Alliance for Responsible Trade. February 12, 2001. www.asc-hsa.org.

²⁷ Other activities included, for instance: a *Conference on threats to democracy in the Americas*, organized by the University of British Columbia; a Symposium on governance and public administration in the Americas, Quebec City, March 18-22, organized by the École nationale d'Administration publique; a conference of Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas, Ottawa, March 28-30, organized by the Assembly of First Nations; AmeriContact 2001, Quebec City, April 3-5, organized by the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie du Québec métropolitain; Conference on Free Trade in the Americas: Challenges and Perspectives, Montreal, April 17-20, organized by La Conférence de Montréal; a Conference on Inter-American Cooperation Beyond Free Trade, Québec City, April 17-19, organized by the Institut québécois des hautes études internationales of Laval University; a Conference on Democracy in the Americas organized by the Carter Centre, Atlanta, October 16-18, 2000; and a Conference on the Summit of the Americas organized by the Inter American

Dialogue and FOCAL. For other activities, see

<http://www.americascanada.org/politics/civilsociety/documents/civilsocietylist-e.pdf>.

²⁸ The roundtable also allowed USTR Robert Zoellick to demonstrate his political savvy. As one political observer noted: “When the allotted time for the roundtable ended with several civil society leaders yet to present their views, the chair said that although the Canadian ministers had no choice but to depart to other engagements, he implored the other ministers to remain. Nevertheless, all the other ministers promptly stood up and departed save one — Robert Zoellick — who politely listened throughout the rest of the presentations.” See: *Feinberg briefs students and faculty on the Quebec Summit of the Americas*. http://www-irps.ucsd.edu/irps/Newsline_Spring2001/spr01_fac.html.

²⁹ The federal government allocated C\$287,000 and the Québec Government allocated C\$200,000. Although these are important and unparalleled sums of money, C\$40 million was allocated by Ottawa for the police security and the erection of the infamous Wall of Shame.

³⁰ Other sizable marches took place in the city as well on that day. The Confederation of Canadian Students led about 4,000 students, from the University of Laval for about two kilometres to the Plains of Abraham, where they met a gathering of public service unions and marched a few blocks away from the perimeter along its length to join the main labour-led march.

³¹ Former Cabinet Minister Sinclair Stevens stated in his column: “I shook my head. I never thought I would ever see this kind of police-state tactic in Canada.” See Sinclair Stevens, “A Police State in the Making. Democracy Trampled in Quebec City,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 24, 2001.

³² Because *Alternatives for the Americas* is a collaborative and ongoing project it will undoubtedly continue to evolve over time. It is now in its second draft; the first draft was prepared for the 1998 People’s Summit. The document can be found at www.web.ca/~comfront/alts4americas/eng/eng.html.

³³ According to the document, if a country is deemed undemocratic by two-thirds of the General Assembly, it will be suspended from participation in the OAS, but “shall continue to fulfill its obligations to the Organization, in particular, its human-rights obligations.” For a thorough and detailed analysis of the Democratic Charter, see Love St.-Fleur, “La Charte démocratique interaméricaine: Un nouvel outil pour la démocratie dans les Amériques?” <http://www.cedim.uqam.ca/chartedemo.htm>.

³⁴ Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez supported this critique. Before adding his signature to the Final Declaration and its democracy clause, he expressed serious reservations about the reference to “representative democracy,” claiming that in Venezuela representative democracy has been a “trick” to allow corrupt politicians to steal public funds. He argued the notion of democracy in the draft should be expanded beyond the narrow focus on formal processes of electoral change toward “participatory democracy.”

³⁵ See Rights & Democracy, “The Inter-American Charter. Submission to the OAS.” Submitted by Warren Allmand, President, August 10, 2001. <http://www.ichrdd.ca>.

³⁶ The OAS Permanent Council met on April 13, 2002, approving a resolution condemning the attempted coup against President Hugo Chavez and agreeing to send a fact-finding mission headed by the Secretary General to investigate the situation and encourage the return to democracy as quickly as possible.

³⁷ The House of Representatives passed the Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority Act (HR 3005) on December 6, 2001, by the razor-thin margin of one vote, which was largely along party lines. The 215-214 vote included support from 194 Republicans and 21 Democrats, while 189 Democrats, 23 Republicans, and

two Independents opposed the bill. Almost six months later, on May 23, 2002, the US Senate voted 66-30 in favour of “fast track” as well. Since the two chambers approved different versions of the bill, they must try to work out a compromise bill that both can support. Unrestricted Trade Promotion Authority would give the Bush administration the authority to send completed international trade agreements to Congress for a simple yes or no vote, preventing Congress from altering or amending the agreements.

³⁸ Although the next official Summit of the Americas is expected to be held in Buenos Aires in April 2003, reports from US, Canadian, and Chilean officials suggest the meeting could be moved. Argentine CSOs have not ruled out the possibility of holding a People’s Summit in Buenos Aires in April 2003, regardless of where and when the official Summit is held.

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