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Achievements, Prospects and Challenges of Hemispheric Cooperation

Norberto Iannelli

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ACHIEVEMENTS, PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF HEMISPHERIC COOPERATION*

Norberto Iannelli**

I. INTRODUCTION

The greater openness of developing countries' economies and the free trade agreements negotiated in recent years have spurred arguments in favor of greater integration in the world; AND they have also given rise to strong opposition. In some cases the opposition stems from the reaction of specific, domestically oriented sectoral interests, and in others, from the activism of groups adhering to what has been termed "globophobia".

Beyond the prevailing debate, however, in the academic sphere the majority consensus acknowledges international trade's significant role in development and poverty-reduction. Through foreign trade, businesses and consumers can access the world market in goods and services, secure a much more diverse supply, and ensure better prices and quality. The latter circumstances favor specialization and the exploitation of countries' comparative advantages (Bhagwati [1988]; Irvin [2001]).

There is also acknowledgement that if countries are to secure the benefits of international trade, real market access is as important as the consistency and quality of domestic policies. A key factor in the success of integration is the necessary harmony between trade liberalization and the internal agenda, a harmony marked by strategies and policies that seek to increase and diversify exports, attract investment, attend to the most sensitive productive sectors, and generally improve competitiveness.

In Latin America, the process of economic opening and trade liberalization was not always accompanied by domestic policies and strategies that responded to the demands of the new environment. Governments accorded greater priority to short-term needs than to implementing the reforms demanded by changes in the internal and external contexts. There were a number of reasons for this, including a lack of macroeconomic robustness, high levels of public indebtedness, political conditions, institutional deficiencies, and a lack of financial resources to address urgent social needs. With few exceptions, such as Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador, there was no clear link between foreign trade policy, on the one hand, and growth and development strategies on the other. Doubtless an economy's size is a significant determinant of whether a similar strategy can be adopted. But in medium-sized countries with notable commercial success, such as Mexico, the conditions were theoretically in place for this link to be forged, such that greater benefits could be derived from integration. These days, however, it is acknowledged that the absence of specific

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domestic policies and strategies has had an adverse impact on particular sectors. Furthermore, the challenge posed by increasingly competitive actors has prompted discussion of whether trade and investment benefits were actually secured in the past (Villareal [2005]).

Notwithstanding the tasks still pending, as well as the progress and setbacks experienced so far, it should be recognized that the countries of the region have taken some undeniably important steps in pursuing what has been termed their multipolar strategy (Devlin and Vodusek [2005]). Hence largely because of the obsolescence of the import-substitution model that became evident in the 1980s, countries embarked on four processes in the trade area, in some cases simultaneously. These explain the strategy pursued to date: (1) the unilateral reduction of existing tariffs and the elimination of a substantial number of non-tariff barriers; (2) the negotiation of subregional integration agreements with neighboring countries; (3) at the multilateral level, the implementation of commitments assumed during the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); and (4) the negotiation by several countries of bilateral agreements with the United States and, in the cases of Mexico and Chile, with the European Union and other developed countries.

These experiences have spawned greater awareness of what today seems to be much more obvious to governments: the absence of a necessary correlation between opening and integration, on the one hand, and economic development and poverty-reduction on the other hand, if there is not a true liberalization of foreign markets and the development of national capacities to take advantage of them.

Aware of this, and in response to current demands, in recent years international organizations and national cooperation agencies have carried out various Trade Capacity-Building (TCB) programs geared mainly towards less developed countries. The goals of these programs have differed, depending on whether the aim was to facilitate implementation of the WTO's rules and disciplines -an area in which Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)¹ has also participated actively-, foster the competitive capacity of certain sectors, strengthen certain institutions, or favor commercial ties with trade partners. This is usually the case for the European Union, which in addition to its national cooperation programs, normally includes a special chapter on international cooperation in its inter-regional association agreements.²

With the start of a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework in November 2001, technical assistance and trade capacity-building received new impetus. The Doha Ministerial Declaration identified the issue as crucial to the development of the world trading system, and emphasized the importance of mainstreaming trade into development plans and poverty-reduction strategies.

In the context of Doha, three outcomes are salient:

- (i) To disseminate and facilitate coordination among various international initiatives, the Secretariats of the WTO and the OECD created a database for technical assistance and

¹ APEC's WTO Capacity Building Activities. APEC-WTO Capacity Building Group. May, 2002.

² A notable example is that in 2000, the European Development Fund financed projects in the amount € 20 million to increase the export capacity of fisheries products from countries in Asia, the Caribbean and Africa that negotiated an association agreement. (Bernard and Lacomte [2003]). For more information on European cooperation, see Santiso [2002].

training, which provides information on current programs at the national and regional levels. Its aim is to avert duplication, identify unsatisfied needs, and monitor the degree of implementation of the commitments assumed in Doha.

- (ii) An increase in financial resources for TCB activities and the creation of the Doha Agenda Global Trust Fund.
- (iii) Improved operation of existing programs for less developed countries: Joint Integrated Technical Assistance Program³ (JITAP) for African countries and the Integrated Framework (IF) for Trade-Related Technical Assistance for Less Developed Countries.⁴

Advances at the multilateral level found echo in the hemispheric integration process. In response to current demands, and despite the delay in accepting them, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) also finally established a cooperation program, one that is open to the main national and international organizations working in this field. The program has been interpreted as a real political achievement on the part of the smaller economies,⁵ since the size asymmetries among the FTAA countries were recognized for the first time in a concrete manner. For the first time, too, something similar happened not after but simultaneously to the very process of negotiating a trade agreement.

Regrettably, the implementation of the Hemispheric Cooperation Program (HCP) has been constrained by the paralysis of the FTAA negotiations, and thus has been extremely slow.

Although the future of the HCP process is unclear, the experience to date in the Hemisphere provides sufficient basis to analyze its origin and peculiarities, as well as its chief difficulties and determinants. The bilateral negotiations between the United States and Central America, the Dominican Republic and the Andean countries also provide important input for the analysis in this study, and the lessons learned can be very helpful to ensuring the successful implementation of the HCP.

³ JITAP originated in 1994 at the end of the Uruguay Round of the GATT. The aim was to strengthen the capacity of African countries to participate in the WTO, to integrate them into the multilateral trading system, and to upgrade the export capacity of their businesses. In 1998, the WTO, UNCTAD and the International Trade Center established a Common Trust Fund to strengthen the trade capacity of eight African countries until the end of 2002. This was called JITAP I. Following a favorable review of this initiative, JITAP II was established. At the start of 2003 the program was extended to eight other countries. The aim was to coordinate and achieve synergy with both the IF and other similar initiatives, such as the New Association for African Development and the Cotonou Agreement.

⁴ The IF is coordinated by the WTO and involves participation by the World Bank, the IMF, UNCTAD, the International Trade Center in Geneva, the UNDP and bilateral donors. This program was established in 1997 at the High Level Meeting on Trade Development in less developed countries organized by the WTO. The aim of the IF is to ensure integrated and coordinated assistance, through existing channels, that less developed countries (LDCs) need in order to meet their development goals, and to facilitate the mainstreaming of trade policy into national development plans as a part of a poverty-reduction strategy.

⁵ The terms "developing countries" or "less developed countries", as they were used in the GATT-OMC, were not used in the FTAA process. Instead, the term "smaller economies", advocated in particular by CARICOM, was the only term used, although it does not fully describe the situations attendant on existing asymmetries.

II. THE FTAA AND HEMISPHERIC COOPERATION

A. Asymmetries in the Formation of the FTAA

In 1994, apart from some reticence in the areas of timeframes and methods, the call to establish the FTAA was favorably received by Latin American and Caribbean countries. Acceptance of the project, which was backed by the Clinton administration, was above all a political decision, one that assumed that the benefits of integration would substantially exceed the costs. The necessary evaluation of its true impact on national economies, and of the balance of mutual concessions needed to meet the goal of hemispheric free trade, were obviously left for later discussions.

At the time, the very formalization of an agreement with the United States was considered crucial to economic growth and institutional modernization. In light of the conclusion of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), for many countries a failure to take advantage of this historic opportunity meant that it might be impossible to repair the trade discrimination that the latter agreement had introduced.⁶

The favorable expectations aroused by the US initiative, however, were marked by a clear awareness of the potential difficulties posed by negotiation of a free trade agreement among 34 countries in a heterogeneous bloc, one characterized by wide asymmetries and very different development levels (see Bustillo and Ocampo [2004]).

Subregions	Population mill.	GDP US\$ billions
NAFTA	421	11,767
MERCOSUR	221	573
Andean Community	117	184
Central America	35	63
CARICOM	6	24

Source: World Bank. [2002].

Despite the desire for openness and integration, this heterogeneity nourished a fear of eliminating trade protection measures without appropriate safeguards, both in terms of the conditions in which tariff-elimination would be agreed and of the need to reconvert and adjust national economies. In short, the concern was to not exacerbate the effects of existing differences in competitiveness levels -an illustration of the current gap is shown below- and of the structural weaknesses evident in most countries of the region. At the same time, the belief that the developing countries might face higher costs in implementing the obligations assumed⁷ and in

⁶ This was especially clear in the case of Central America and the Caribbean. For some countries, a bilateral agreement with the United States became a clear foreign policy objective -first Chile, which had to wait a long time for an accord, and later, in a quite different context, Central American and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR), Panama, and the Andean countries.

⁷ In large part, this understanding arose from the experience gained during the long years of multilateral negotiations, especially the discussion and application of special and differential treatment (SDT) for developing and less developed countries in the Uruguay Round of the GATT. This matter has become controversial in the new round of multilateral trade negotiations, which were launched at Doha in 2001.

adapting their economies to trade liberalization supported the demand for special and differential treatment. Additionally, and especially in the case of CARICOM, such considerations highlighted the need to create a Regional Integration Fund to help meet these costs. An appropriate response to existing asymmetries was needed, so as to facilitate the hemispheric integration process.

COMPETITIVENESS INDEX BASED ON 104 COUNTRIES

Countries	2004	2003
United States	2	2
Canada	15	16
Chile	22	28
Mexico	48	47
Costa Rica	50	51
Trinidad & Tobago	51	49
El Salvador	53	48
Uruguay	54	50
Brazil	57	54
Panama	58	59
Colombia	64	63
Peru	67	57
Dominican Republic	72	62
Argentina	74	78
Guatemala	80	89
Venezuela	85	82
Ecuador	90	86
Nicaragua	95	90
Honduras	97	94
Bolivia	98	85
Paraguay	100	95

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report. WEF [2003-2004]

These considerations were clearly evident during the preparations for the 1994 Miami Summit, and were expressed in the meetings organized by the US government with countries from the various subregions. At these meetings, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Central America, and the Andean countries requested preferential treatment and, specifically, gradual and non-reciprocal trade liberalization (Feinberg [1997]).⁸

As a result of these consultations and the subsequent negotiation of the summit texts, in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action, the concerns of the subregions and the countries

⁸ At that time the flexible model that APEC had adopted in accordance with a countries' income level became an obligatory reference for advocating asymmetric treatment in the new negotiations.

were taken into account. Based on a recognition of differences in development levels and economic size, the foundations of special and differential treatment were introduced into that initial declaration, as was the idea of technical assistance as a tool to ensure successful integration.⁹ Years later the HCP was developed on this basis; its development and implementation coincide with the final and as yet unconcluded phase of the negotiating process.¹⁰

B. Special and Differential Treatment as a Response to Asymmetry

Once the general principles that should guide the creation of the FTAA had been accepted, for years the main question was how to make them operational in the negotiating process. In general, and as GATT's Uruguay Round had sought, the countries wanted a balanced agreement, one marked by clear rules to level the playing field and, in the case of the smaller economies, flexibility in implementing the obligations assumed and preferential market access to the bigger economies.

From the outset, however, there were constraints on tackling and resolving the asymmetries. It was assumed that countries participating in the FTAA should have the same rights and obligations and that, irrespective of the size of their economies, any special treatment should arise from the negotiations. In this regard the model, as in the Uruguay Round, was that of a "single undertaking" with respect to all obligations, including rules and disciplines, that would form a valid agreement for all parties. There was acceptance of the possibility of negotiating flexibility in implementation, but it was established that such clauses would be negotiated country-by-country, sector-by-sector, and product-by-product in each Negotiating Group. Additionally, in the event that the negotiations might give rise to clauses that could be applied horizontally, these would be submitted for the consideration of the FTAA Trade Negotiations Committee. These principles remain valid despite the new negotiating framework agreed at the trade ministerial meeting in Miami in late-2003. This acknowledged the prospect of two kinds of agreement: one among all 34 participants, and one plurilateral, based on agreements among countries that are prepared to negotiate more ambitious rules and market access, and/or issues excluded from the common format of the agreement.

Even given these constraints, however, "flexibility" can vary significantly and new approaches can be adopted in the future in line with the eventual scope of the agreement's ambition. In principle, therefore, the FTAA could include provisions that fall within the five categories of

⁹ The heads of state recognized that "... economic integration and the creation of a free trade area will be complex endeavors, particularly in view of the wide differences in the levels of development and size of economies existing in our Hemisphere. We will remain cognizant of these differences as we work toward economic integration in the Hemisphere. We look to our own resources, ingenuity, and individual capacities as well as to the international community to help us achieve our goals (...) As we work to achieve the "Free Trade Area of the Americas," opportunities such as technical assistance will be provided to facilitate the integration of the smaller economies and increase their level of development".

¹⁰ Latin American and Caribbean countries have traditionally been recipients of North-South assistance and cooperation; only to a much lesser extent have they engaged in South-South cooperation in areas directly or indirectly related to trade. Although the agreements between these countries include some clauses on special treatment for less developed countries -such as more favorable conditions for the implementation of trade liberalization or rules of origin- they have not included general cooperation programs. MERCOSUR recently decided to implement an initiative similar to the EU structural funds, for Paraguay and Uruguay; the scope and implementation of this initiative remain to be agreed upon by the four countries' highest political authorities.

special and differential treatment (STD) identified by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretariat (1994) in the Uruguay Round,¹¹ and recognize the exceptions and flexibility contained in the CAFTA-DR¹² and other North-South (US-Panama and US-Andean countries) or South-South (MERCOSUR -*Mercado Común del Sur*- and South American countries) accords.

Thus there can be many ways of addressing asymmetries among the Hemisphere's economies; one of these -technical assistance for countries that need it- is already in effect.¹³ When the trade ministers formally decided to establish the HCP, however, they included technical assistance in a more ambitious program.¹⁴ This offered countries the chance to increase their institutional capacity to negotiate and subsequently implement the agreements. At the same time, and as part of their own national strategies, it enables countries to link and harmonize trade policy objectives with national strategies for development and poverty-reduction.

¹¹ The five categories are: (1) limited-time exemptions and longer periods to meet obligations; (2) differential thresholds for complying with certain commitments; (3) flexibility in obligations and procedures; (4) other commitments and "maximum performance clauses"; and (5) technical advice and assistance. (*The Outcome of the Uruguay Round: An Initial Assessment. Supporting Papers to the Trade and Development Report*).

¹² CAFTA is the free trade agreement between the United States and five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua), which the Dominican Republic later joined.

¹³ Since the start of the FTAA process the Tripartite Commission, made up of the IDB, ECLAC and the OAS, has proved invaluable in this field, providing technical assistance to countries and working groups, and later to negotiating groups.

¹⁴ The HCP was formally established at the Trade Ministers Meeting in Quito, Ecuador on November 2, 2002. Its main aim is "... to strengthen the capacity of those countries that seek assistance to participate in the negotiations, to implement their trade commitments, to face the challenges of hemispheric integration and to maximize the benefits of that integration, including productive capacity and competitiveness in the region".

III. THE HCP AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

A. Conceptual Distinctions

The HCP has inherited a great deal of international experience in the area of trade capacity-building, in both conceptual and procedural terms. The challenges of designing and managing technical assistance and international cooperation are connected to the changes in the international context and the different means adopted by countries in pursuit of development. The various approaches taken over the years have helped mold different views of the scope of the endeavor, both among the countries themselves and among international organizations and national cooperation agencies.

It has been pointed out (Devlin and Vodusek [2005]) that "trade capacity-building" has shifted from "micro" to "macro", -from occasional and specific interventions in the 1960s and 1970s to a more inclusive and holistic outlook. That, is evident, for example, in the approach taken by UNCTAD and the OECD to attend to the needs of less developed countries.¹⁵

In this context, recent years have seen the creation of various programs that are sometimes referred to as development capacity-building.

The two terms are often used interchangeably but in fact they have different goals, and to some extent this conditions their implementation procedures.

According to the guidelines of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, the aim of TCB is to increase the ability of the various social actors and the government to devise and implement a trade strategy that has been mainstreamed into a broader development strategy, on the understanding that trade is not an end in itself but rather a means to development (OECD [2001] and [2003]). In the OECD's view it involves not only addressing the needs of particular sectors or sub sectors but also of implementing a comprehensive program geared to all aspects of development, and within that framework to define and apply trade policy. Forging a link between trade policy and development strategies is deemed crucial for less developed countries, where the constraints include minimal institutional capacity, macroeconomic fragility and high levels of poverty.

In contrast to this comprehensive conception of TCB as a long-range process, it is also used in a more limited sense, as reflected in the HCP and in other recent experiences in the Hemisphere. In this case the aim is to meet specific needs by creating or strengthening the institutional capacity needed to participate actively in trade negotiations, to implement the obligations thereby assumed and/or to deal with the challenges and opportunities that trade liberalization presents to a country's productive sectors. Hence the support provided seeks to meet particular short-, medium- and long-term needs with no precondition that a development strategy as such should already be in place. The design of such a strategy is left to the sovereign decision of each country.

¹⁵ For greater detail on this issue see (UNCTAD [2004]).

B. The HCP and its Implementation

In view of the experiences and outcomes at the multilateral level, which did not always meet expectations, the countries of the Hemisphere, and particularly the United States and Canada, advocated a pragmatic and effective cooperation program for the FTAA. Hence the concept of the HCP was more restrictive, but it was designed to meet the different kinds of needs deemed by the countries to be priorities, to do so flexibly and (above all) fast, and to take account of the importance of coordination among the countries involved and the donors. The guiding principle was to devise something that was fast rather than perfect, something that would be put to the test when the time came to implement it as part of the cooperation processes that formed part of the negotiations and bilateral agreements between the countries of the region and the United States.

According to the original idea, the main features of the HCP are as follows:

- (i) It covers all of the processes involved in creating a free trade area: negotiations, implementation of the agreements and meeting the challenges posed by the move to free trade. These issues are to be tackled simultaneously.
- (ii) Its application goes beyond technical assistance and smaller economies. It is open to any countries that request it.
- (iii) The final beneficiaries of technical cooperation and assistance activities may be the public sector, the private sector or civil society.
- (iv) The program includes technical support to help countries develop national and/or subregional strategies within which needs and programs are defined, prioritized and linked, in line with the countries' aims and interests, and to help them identify sources of financial and non-financial assistance.
- (v) It formalizes a coordinated relationship for cooperation among countries and international and national cooperation agencies (donors) that operates simultaneously with the negotiation process.

Thus it differs from other initiatives, both in terms of the requirements for and limits on countries' eligibility (in the case of the IF, for example, certain conditions must be met and the program is only for less developed countries), and of the degree of formalization with which the program is implemented.¹⁶ In the HCP, a country need only ask to participate in the program, and develop a national strategy that identifies needs; there are no great requirements as to the substance of the strategy or how it was devised. In the IF, however, the following must be demonstrated: (1) a commitment to mainstream trade into development strategies; (2) that the country is preparing a poverty-reduction strategy; (3) that the country has created an environment that supports trade integration and that its growth plan involves pro-trade domestic reforms; and 4) that the country has the capacity to conduct a Trade Integration Diagnostic Study with a donor and to follow it up.¹⁷

¹⁶ The IF was originally established with minimal procedures; its formalization was in the hands of a Working Group, which a bureaucratized the process rather than making it effective. See OECD-DAC/WTO [2004b].

¹⁷ For greater detail, see WTO [2002].

PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING IF

Countries should:

1. Establish a national implementation structure.
2. Select a lead donor as a facilitator of the process.
3. Agree on the terms of reference and timing for the Trade Integration Diagnostic Study (TIDS).
4. Develop the Diagnostic Study to identify:
 - a. Sectors with export potential.
 - b. Supply-side constraints on trade.
 - c. Human and institutional capacity constraints.
 - d. Measures to be taken to implement international and regional trade agreements.
 - e. Implications of the analysis and recommendations on growth and poverty-reduction.
5. Establish, as part of the TIDS, an Action Plan including policy reform measures, sectoral plans and trade-related assistance needs.
6. Convene a workshop for social actors to define priorities for the Action Plan.
7. Mainstream the prioritized Action Plan into the country's national plans for development and poverty-reduction.
8. Implementation of the Action Plan, including policy reform and sectoral measures, and delivery of technical assistance by the international development community.

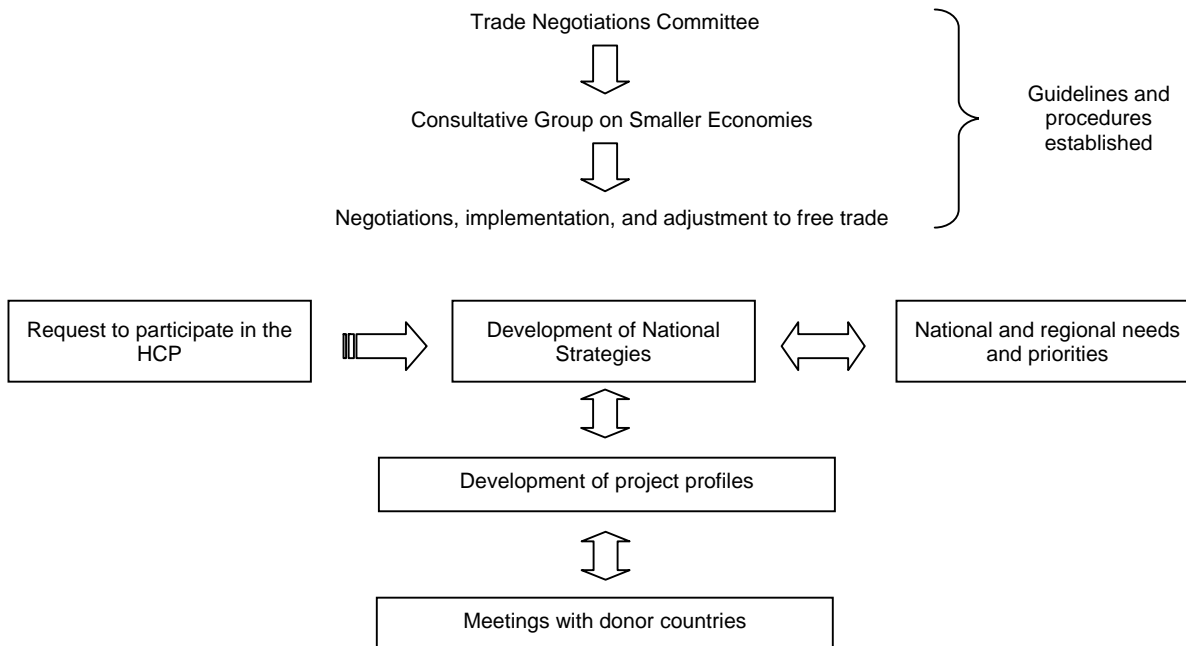
Source: WTO. "The Integrated Framework. How Does it Work?". [2002].

The HCP's implementation was designed in the FTAA's Consultative Group on Smaller Economies (CGSE). A country wishing to participate in the program need only make a request and develop national and/or subregional strategies.¹⁸ The latter should prioritize needs, either those of a horizontal nature or in reference to each of the issues on the negotiating agenda. In this framework the next step is to identify profiles to be presented to different donors. To that end, and with the help of the Tripartite Committee, the CGSE established a common basic format to harmonize the information provided by the countries and to identify shared needs.¹⁹ In the first part the information requested includes general data on the country -specifically, a summary of economic and foreign trade data, the country's participation in integration agreements and the results thereof, international cooperation received on trade-related issues, and international trade negotiations in progress. The second part of the document includes the needs of the country or subregion in the short, medium and long term in the three phases of the hemispheric process: (i) preparing for the negotiations; (ii) implementing the trade agreements; and (iii) adjusting to integration. Thus the process was intended to be "demand-oriented", respecting the peculiarities of each country.

¹⁸ To date, only the Andean Community has developed a Subregional Strategy.

¹⁹ It should be noted that from the outset the FTAA institutionally recognized asymmetry by creating the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies, in which all 34-member countries participated. Later, during the negotiations, that Group continued and a decision was made to include, on the agenda of each Negotiation Group, the special circumstances of the smaller economies and the special and differential treatment that might be identified. With the support of the Tripartite Committee, the Group has the mandate to monitor and assess the HCP.

PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE HCP



In preparing strategies, countries could request direct assistance from agencies and institutions: the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Organization of American States (OAS).²⁰ The aim was to ensure that the countries had an initial document to present at a first meeting joint with international organizations and national cooperation agencies. The first meeting was held on October 14 and 15, 2003, at IDB headquarters.

At that time, the 25 countries that had asked to participate in the HCP presented their national strategies. The latter differed in depth, but most of them stipulated similar needs that had to be met if the countries were successfully to tackle both the negotiations and the implementation of the obligations assumed. Similar issues arose with respect to the adjustment phase; these concerned taking full advantage of the agreement and meeting the costs of reconverting domestic industry.

These strategies were not intended to be static, but to be part of a process that would become richer as analysis of national short-, medium- and long-term needs deepened. The view of the latter has been refined and needs have been identified in more concrete terms, especially those related to the adjustment or transition to free trade, in such a way as to facilitate the preparation of project profiles. This entails more demanding reflection on the opportunities and challenges

²⁰ In the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies, the countries agreed on the assistance program for preparing strategies. This was how the IDB collaborated with the Andean Community, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru. ECLAC did so with Guatemala, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago. And the OAS did so with the OECS countries, Barbados, El Salvador, and Uruguay. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also collaborated, financing technical assistance to Guyana, Honduras, and Suriname.

that free trade poses for a country's productive and social sectors, and greater effort at internal consultation and coordination.

After the first meeting at the IDB, countries continued (with varying degrees of success) to define project profiles that would be presented to donors at subregional meetings starting in 2004. These did not take place, however, largely because of the paralysis of the FTAA negotiations.

Many of the strategies presented were far from being highly precise, but perhaps one benefit of the exercise was simply carrying it out. Despite the serious constraints encountered, for the first time this process prompted reflection and internal coordination among the various public agencies, giving rise to an initial outline of national needs. Moreover, for those countries that later engaged in bilateral negotiations with the United States, these strategies became a starting point for identifying more concrete needs related to the negotiation and administration of new rules and disciplines in areas such as rules of origin (particularly certifying and controlling them), customs procedures, intellectual property, compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, technical standards, services, labor, the environment and dispute settlement. Identification of these needs also centered on a deeper review of the adjustment of productive activities. Hence greater attention was paid to sensitive sectors and regions, and programs were devised to improve competitiveness.

NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Despite the differences in experience and the types of resources available, the specific needs raised by the negotiations are linked in most cases to the lack of human and financial resources, and of the availability of specialized training in both the public and private sectors.

Interaction and coordination among the government, the private sector and civil society also seem to suffer from significant institutional weaknesses. That circumstance affects the development of the consensus needed among various social actors on the timeliness and appropriateness of the trade agreements that the governments intend to negotiate.

In the need for training and for technical studies that underpin national proposals and the evaluation of offers made by trading partners, national strategies recognize certain priority areas, such as market access, agriculture, rules of origin, services, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, the environment, labor laws and intellectual property. Practically the same issues are relevant to the needs that arise when the agreements are implemented, and especially strengthening the institutions responsible -customs, sanitary and quality certification services, and the offices of various government ministries and agencies responsible for managing trade agreements. This entails tackling deficiencies in the area of infrastructure, especially databases, laboratories (equipment and input for risk assessment and sanitary certification, metrology, quality standards, etc.).

Additionally, there are some common concerns, such as the need to evaluate the impact of the agreement -for the smaller countries, the fiscal impact of tariff-elimination is more important- and to inform civil society of the FTAA's progress and results.

As regards the adjustment of economies and productive sectors to hemispheric free trade, the identification of needs is still incipient but one element of national concern is the desire for higher levels of systematic competitiveness in specific productive activities. These include needs for reconversion and/or assistance in sectors with current potential comparative advantages or disadvantages under free trade. At a more specific level, in most cases emphasis has been placed on the need to create a climate that attracts foreign investment geared to the development and diversification of exports. Another priority has been to include SMEs and the regions in the integration process, while taking account of the fact that in several countries the agricultural sector lacks international competitiveness and might have to undergo substantial reconversion during the transition to free trade.

IV. THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF HEMISPHERIC COOPERATION

Implementation of the HCP is at a very early stage. Realizing its potential depends on the one hand, on the future of the FTAA negotiations and, on the other, on the value-added it brings to the current phase of the process. The question is what additional results the HCP yield to those countries which already have obtained those in their bilateral relationships with various donors, and which might be attractive for those that already have their own institutional channel for cooperation -the Trade Capacity-Building Committee- in bilateral trade agreements with the United States. In that context, the "bilateralism" might be seen as weakening the HCP or diminishing its value-added. This is possible although not necessarily certain, as long as the Program aims to attract extra-regional funds, especially from European and Asian organizations and, as in any dynamic process, new needs, better tools of cooperation and conditions are identified.

At the same time, the HCP depends on a set of political conditions that will be difficult to change in the foreseeable future, and which affect its substance and scope. It is strongly influenced by another set of conditions related to the behavior of the main actors: the countries that receive assistance and those that supply it. Hence it is helpful to explore the political conditionality and the difficulties that originate with the main cooperation actors, so that identifying and eventually overcoming them will allow the program to develop successfully.

A. Political Determinants

One of the political determinants of the HCP is the underlying concept of the FTAA negotiations: it is determined by each of the parties' interests. The breadth and scope of cooperation is evidence of this conception, which permeates the integration process and affects its ambitiousness.

Historical experience suggests that there is a link between the conception (and therefore the depth) of integration initiatives, the efforts made to address asymmetries among the partners, and the corresponding plans for assistance and cooperation. Europe is paradigmatic in this regard. First, the post-war Marshall Plan facilitated integration with the strategic goal of spurring economic development, thereby raising a barrier to the feared advance of Soviet communism (Ostry [1997]). Second, Europe subsequently made efforts to build a single market, efforts that simultaneously addressed national and regional asymmetries using structural and cohesion funds (Giordano *et al.* [2004]).

Unlike the European example, many free trade agreements aim for different degrees of integration and are less ambitious association schemes. When they feature a cooperation chapter, therefore, it is normally governed by a more limited criterion, one linked to the implementation of the obligations assumed in other chapters or to cooperation needs in certain areas. Examples include the agreements between the United States and several countries in the Hemisphere, which stipulate the need for technical assistance in the areas of customs, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical standards and intellectual property.

In general, the prevailing view in free trade agreements is based on the commercial gains of greater market access, which is also an aim of the agreed rules and disciplines. This view, relative to the European example, necessarily delimits the significance and magnitude of cooperation.

Basically, what predominates is a commercialist strategy in which sectoral interests predominate with a view to maximizing the market access preferences that can be secured. What is absent from the negotiations and the cooperation offered (or, if present, it is highly limited) is a long-term outlook expressed in a regional or subregional development strategy that is based on free trade.

The FTAA was not conceived as a deep integration model of the European kind, which entails a substantial cession of national sovereignty in various areas. It is inescapable, however, that its establishment at the 1994 Summit of the Americas was in a context marked by broader strategic political and economic objectives. In that sense the process should be governed by a vision that surpasses the commercialist model, and the goal of the HCP, while facilitating the realization of the benefits of integration, should be to help meet the Summit's goals in areas such as strengthening the Hemisphere's democracies, increasing prosperity, social justice, poverty reduction, and making better use of human potential. In this regard various countries and country groups (CARICOM, MERCOSUR, the Andean Community and Venezuela), in different ways, have proposed in the FTAA that, given current asymmetries, a fund should be set up to finance the reforms demanded by integration. The aim is to avoid greater indebtedness and overcome the financial constraints that in some countries hamper even the execution of loans already approved. Only Canada has reacted positively, creating a fund for the HCP (the Canada Trade Fund) in the amount of 24 million Canadian dollars, to finance small projects that do not exceed \$ 150,000.

It is unlikely that the absence of a positive response from the United States on this issue will change for the moment, especially in the context of a stagnant FTAA process. There might be a new perspective of this issue in the future, but the financial basis for US cooperation is that full use should be made of the existing resources in international organizations, essentially the IDB and the World Bank, and of contributions from national agencies such as USAID and others.

Despite the expectations once raised, however, the countries that have negotiated bilaterally with the United States have had no option but to operate within the limits of this perspective. Their goal is to secure non-reimbursable financing for small projects, many of which directly benefit the private sector, and (to the extent that their financial circumstances allow) to use external credits to finance the most difficult reforms geared to preparing the government and productive sectors for the new environment introduced by a free trade agreement with the United States.

B. Determinants Related to the Actors

Preparing the Countries

The HCP preceded US-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) but the start of bilateral negotiations between the United States and Central America in 2003 allowed the ideas and procedures designed for the HCP to be put into practice before they were applied hemisphere-

wide.²¹ The lessons learned during this exercise, and in the bilateral negotiations between the Andean countries and the United States, are valuable for the hemispheric initiative.

The experience to date, especially in bilateral negotiations, suggest that preparing the countries must take into account prudent time management, an appropriate process for identifying needs and developing requests for cooperation and, as regards the social sectors, extreme care in dealing with the expectations that can arise with respect to the real prospect of securing international cooperation.

Time Management

The use of time in preparing countries affects international cooperation. Identifying needs and devising cooperation or technical assistance projects are part of a complex process that usually takes more time than might be desired. In most cases, responses cannot be immediate, and thus national priorities do not always match the instruments and procedures of international organizations. Hence what happened in several countries of the Hemisphere is not surprising. Despite the length of the FTAA process so far, there has been a strikingly slow capacity to react to the demands arising from the negotiating process and from the subsequent obligations.

Obstacles to Presenting Requests

In the CAFTA and other bilateral arrangements, the process of identifying national requests for cooperation has highlighted the importance of institutional matters. All the indications are that a successful process and outcome demand the following: (a) sufficient internal coordination between the ministry of foreign trade -or whichever body is responsible for trade negotiations- and other government agencies, especially the treasury or the finance ministry, which tend to yield decision-making power over international cooperation commitments; (b) technical, and in some cases, political problems, which tend to arise when priority projects are being evaluated and chosen. The latter process can give rise to two very negative situations: (1) one in which it is impossible to identify concrete needs that can be turned into projects, and thus the process is fruitless; or (2) an "inflation" in the project profiles presented, the result of sectoral pressures, and an absence of any priority order in the framework of national strategies.

The planning and management of international cooperation can have varying degrees of centralization or decentralization, but if the above situations are to be averted there must be, at a minimum, substantial coordination among the different agencies and ministries.

²¹ CAFTA's point of departure was the preparation of national plans. Thereafter a 90-day plan was devised to identify the most immediate needs arising from the imminent negotiations. During this process a Trade Capacity Building Committee was set up, comprising government officials and representatives of international organizations: the IDB, OAS and ECLAC (members of the Tripartite Committee), the World Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Several US government agencies took part, especially USAID, as did NGOs such as the Humane Society of United States; the Business Coalition for Capacity Building was created, comprising businesses interested in trade and investment in the region, such as Gap, Microsoft, and Procter and Gamble.

Sometimes these difficulties stem from the absence of a clear, agreed and strategic framework that defines the countries' priorities for cooperation and indebtedness.

Over the medium and long term, it is very important to have internal consensus on two basic matters within the public sector: (1) how trade policy strategies are examined and integrated into national plans, and thus how to prepare the country to cope with the process of adjusting its productive structure to greater openness and international competition; and (2) in view of the foregoing, how the country prioritizes the projects to be financed with external credits or non-reimbursable resources.

The answers to these questions remain pending in several countries, and in some cases the lack of a response might be attributable to the cultural and institutional inheritance of the import-substitution model, which persists despite its abandonment as a growth strategy.

Reaching an internal consensus on these issues has several obvious and positive effects. Notably, in terms of communication with donors, it provides an important opportunity to convey a clear idea of what the country needs, while at the same time showing logical consistency in requests for cooperation. Rather than simply preparing a list of project profiles, therefore, the process involves developing and presenting a group of initiatives on the basis of a functional perspective of trade policy and its role in the country's economic development.

Finally, as regards national agencies and international cooperation organizations, urgent attention should be paid to two matters: first, the strategy to be followed with each organization or agency, their bureaucratic requirements and political constraints, especially when the cooperation agencies are from a country with which negotiations are underway or which has become a trading partner. The second issue is the need to retain ownership in the identification of needs, in terms of assuming them and meeting them as a challenge and an opportunity for the country.

Managing Expectations and Building Consensus

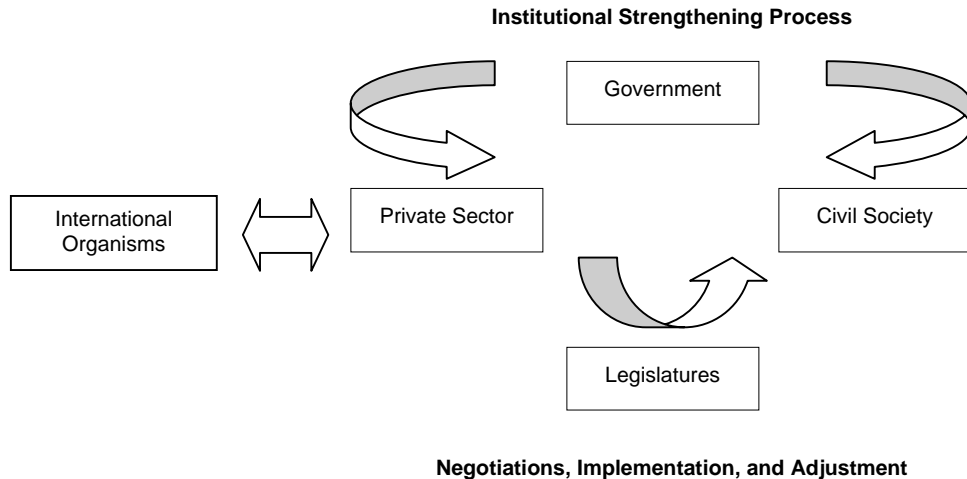
At the beginning of the CAFTA negotiations it was clear that the Central American countries wanted the agreement to be accompanied by an international cooperation program that would allow them to maximize the benefits of free trade with the United States.

When the USTR announced it would make \$ 47 million available to the CAFTA countries to facilitate the bilateral agreement, it aroused overly high expectations. The countries believed they would receive an assistance package that would enter directly into their public accounts and that to some extent would obviate the need to request new credits, thereby averting the risk of higher debt. In CAFTA, therefore, there was a clear mismatch between expectations and reality -which should serve as a lesson. That experience introduced a dose of greater realism into the negotiations of the Andean countries and the United States.

The management of expectations is obviously related to governments' dialogue with and outreach to society, and also to the building of basic consensus with social actors on the decision to start trade negotiations, their substance, and the subsequent implementation. Even in those countries that are more politically committed to trade liberalization and to associating with the world's main

traders, the issue of greatest concern -especially in the legislatures- is how to handle the productive sectors that face the challenges and opportunities wrought by greater integration.²²

Given the importance of this process, it is important to refine the institutional capacity of the various social and political actors, providing technical training to private sector organizations, the media, legislators and other civil society bodies. This makes them more receptive to of the issues under discussion, and would help them understand those issues better. It would also ensure more active participation in the different phases of trade negotiations.



The Role of Donors

Adjusting supply to demand has not been simple in bilateral agreements, not only because of the foregoing difficulties affecting countries, but also because of the nature and procedures of international organizations. First, in the case of the IDB and the World Bank, their ability to provide non-reimbursable funding is limited. Only a small percentage of both donors' operations involve such funds. Because of budget constraints, non-reimbursable resources from the OAS and ECLAC are also limited, and are mainly devoted to technical assistance and training. Second, financial organizations have procedures and timeframes that are imposed by their internal bureaucracies, and financial instruments that need to be adapted to the new demand that free trade makes on the region's economies. Despite these constraints, however, in the CAFTA and the current negotiations between the Andean countries and the United States, the organizations have reacted positively: they have been preparing operations that respond to the new environment and in some cases have sought new ways of apply their own instruments. In recent years, in view of the increase in requests from countries, the IDB has created a variety of financial and non-financial instruments that are designed to respond promptly and that are adapted to the new circumstances. Previously, of course, attention was paid to the task of adapting to the new

²² Legislative approval of the US-Chile Free Trade Agreement (FTA) required 27 sessions, most of which centered not so much on the substance of the agreement but rather on the attention to be paid to the most sensitive sectors of the national economy.

circumstances those activities envisaged in projects that were designed before bilateral trade agreements, and that are now being executed. To the extent that the objectives of those projects allow, this process will facilitate prompt reassignment of funds to the implementation of obligations or to adapting the productive apparatus to the new context of trade liberalization.

The other organizations have increased technical assistance and training operations for the Central American countries, and all donors are now taking the same course of action for meeting the needs of the Andean countries.

MAIN AREAS ADDRESSED BY THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE AND THE WORLD BANK
In the CAFTA-DR (2004-2005)

Donors	Loans	Technical Cooperation	Technical Assistance and Training
IDB/MIF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitiveness - Support to the strengthening of the trade sector (negotiations, export development and the implementation of agreements) - Rural development - Agricultural health - Transition to free trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical standards - Support for SMEs - Electronic commerce - Financial sector - Investment - Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labor rights and trade - Evaluation of the impact of trade agreements - Outreach - Trade Policy
World Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitiveness and business climate - Strengthening SMEs - Innovation and technology - Infrastructure 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studies on the business climate, competitiveness, and technological innovation
ECLAC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of databases and statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of trade-related commercial capacity - Agriculture - Competition policy - Labor and the environment - Studies on the impact of negotiations
OAS			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening trade-related commercial capacity - MSMEs and competitiveness - Environment - Science and technology - Dialogue with civil society - Social development

Source: Developed independently based on donor information.

Much remains to be done, however, and objective conditions suggest that some key elements must be taken into account if the role of donors in the TCB process is to be truly beneficial.

1. The importance of including trade as a significant aspect of a donor strategy for the countries, and its parallel in designing financial and non-financial operations.
2. In light of that principle, "standardized prescriptions" should be avoided, as should traditional instruments that might not always be the most appropriate means of meeting countries' real needs in an FTA.
3. The need for special assistance for the private sector and civil society as increasingly important actors in trade negotiations, and especially as crucial participants in the process of adjusting to the new integration environment.
4. Maximize coordination among donors under the principles of cooperation and complementarity, instead of competition among them.

MAIN INSTRUMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

In recent years the IDB has created various financial instruments to support the efforts of the countries of the region to participate effectively in trade negotiations, to implement agreements, and to engage in the trade-related adjustment. They include the following:

- 1) The Trade, Integration, and Competitiveness Program was established in mid-2003 to assist countries in the transition to free trade. It offers financing in a single package and operation for various sectoral components under a common objective.
- 2) The Trade Sector Facility, established in 2001, offers loans of up to US\$ 5 million. The program, which has a rapid approval process, is geared to broad institutional strengthening for ministries and other trade-related government agencies. It seeks essentially to build capacity for trade negotiations, the implementation of agreements, the design and installation of information systems, mechanisms to support trade policy coordination, export promotion and investment-attraction.
- 3) The Special Initiative for Trade and Integration, in the period 2002 to 2004, aims to help countries prepare for deeper subregional integration, and to negotiate and implement the trade liberalization agreements under discussion in various international fora. The Special Initiative was designed to respond rapidly to countries' requests. It includes activities in the areas of policy analysis, direct assistance for governments, and information dissemination.
- 4) The management of 6.25 million Canadian dollars in non-reimbursable resources from the Canadian Fund for projects that build trade-related capacity under the HCP framework.
- 5) Use of the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) for non-reimbursable financing to create favorable conditions for private sector development. MIF grants are for individual countries or integration groups in areas such as regulatory frameworks and administrative systems regulating the private sector.
- 6) Through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the IDB and WTO in 2000, the IDB's Institute for the Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean (INTAL) was designated as a center for the coordination of WTO training in the area of trade-related capacity-building throughout the region. The aim is to enhance the negotiating capacity of governments, especially as regards WTO standards and disciplines.
- 7) Within the Bank's Regional Policy Dialogue, the Trade and Integration Network comprises the Vice-Ministers of Trade of Latin America and the Caribbean. The aim is to foster best practices, facilitate regional cooperation and support integration and trade processes.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The future of the HCP will be determined largely by the direction that the FTAA negotiations take and by the interests of its leading actors. As mentioned, its contribution will depend greatly on the value it can add to existing links between the countries on the one hand and international organizations and national cooperation agencies on the other.

There is no doubt that despite donors' valuable initiatives and operations to date within bilateral agreements, the cooperation process has been accompanied by a certain amount of frustration. Whether this is because of the high expectations raised (especially in the CAFTA-DR), to political concerns arising from the need to respond to internal demands, to the procedures used or, at times, deficient awareness of the limitations of international organizations, it is clear that reversing this situation should in future be a priority aim of the hemispheric initiative.

The various cooperation processes underway have provided important lessons, many of which are truly positive and should be preserved. Reflection on them could serve as a starting point for a reviewing and assessment of those processes and the future of hemispheric cooperation, especially in view of the following:

- (i) Countries are fully aware of the strategic importance of including international cooperation in the negotiating process.

The Central American countries were the first to appreciate this during the CAFTA negotiations. Such cooperation made it possible to meet the economic, social and institutional needs outlined in national plans, and also offers the political benefit of enabling countries to "sell" the free trade agreement to the sectors most resistant to integration. The simultaneous management of programs and projects geared to preparing the country to face the challenges of free trade has been used as a signal within countries that in the new integration environment they will be better placed to face more external competition, to undertake the necessary reconversion of business, and to become more competitive. In short, cooperation has been portrayed as the flipside of trade openness, and thus ongoing processes should swiftly be endowed with the capacity to respond faster so as to avoid foreseeable political costs.

- (ii) A process geared solely to demand barely exists. But cooperation is of strategic importance if supply largely coincides with and satisfies identified needs, and if the recipient countries are able to process it, either through the available institutional and financial capacity or using the instrument through which the cooperation is supplied. Hence overcoming the existing constraints on countries and donors should entail a process of mutual adjustment in which the shared responsibilities of both sets of actors are combined. As mentioned earlier, however, the countries' ability to devise and implement an internal agenda that categorizes priority needs in a free-trade context is crucial to a successful cooperation process and, more importantly, to their taking real advantage of the benefits of trade integration. This matter is highly dependent on the domestic political context, which can hasten, delay, or even obviate the prospect of having such an agenda, or having the budgetary and/or foreign credit resources needed for its implementation.

It is not easy to evaluate the compatibility between supply and demand. International experience has shown that it is very difficult to reach consensus on what constitutes a successful outcome in this regard. This is mainly because organizations have different criteria for assessing outcomes, and also because in many cases trade-related activities are either inserted into sectoral programs -as can be the case with infrastructure or systematic competitiveness projects- or fall within more comprehensive initiatives that pursue broader objectives that, in the final analysis, are related to development and poverty-reduction. In operational terms, therefore, evaluation is highly complex. Another question is whether to measure success by the amount of financial and non-financial assistance granted -a criterion that might be appropriate from a political perspective but that is insufficient in terms of measuring the socioeconomic impact. Hence the challenge is to develop an appropriate methodology of measurement, preferably one that is harmonized among the different donors.

This issue has not been resolved to date, but it has prompted much discussion at the stage of assessing multilateral initiatives. In this context, it has been suggested that donors should establish a common framework for monitoring and evaluating the targets achieved (TCB [2004]).

- (iii) In a context of excessive asymmetries among countries, perceptions of national needs are magnified when efforts are made to satisfactorily deal with the challenges and opportunities of integration. At the same time, however, the demands imposed by the implementation of obligations assumed -especially addressing productive sectors in a context of fiscal constraints- highlight the need for more non-reimbursable resources from international organizations and national cooperation agencies. With all due regard to lessons learned, including the use of the Canadian Fund in the HCP, it is important to discuss creative ideas on how to provide for a significant source of non-reimbursable resources, and how to use and manage them effectively. Such efforts, together with true market opening in the part of the more developed countries, could overturn the perception of an overly commercialist process, thereby helping to meet the economic, political, and social goals of the Summit of the Americas.

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