

Contact: Mark Schoeff Jr. 202-775-3242 (mschoeff@csis.org);
Gina Maffei 202-775-3167 (gmaffei@csis.org)
www.csis.org

TRADE IN THE AMERICAS

Competing Interests May Make One-Size-Fits-All Agreement Impossible

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19, 2003 – CSIS analysts made the following statements today about Free Trade Area of the Americas talks in Miami:

Sidney Weintraub, CSIS Simon Chair in Political Economy (202-775-3292; sweintraub@csis.org): “The United States wants a comprehensive hemispheric trade agreement. Brazil wants a limited agreement. The less-developed countries want special treatment, and those countries for which the United States is the key market want assured access. This points up the problem of a one-size-fits-all agreement and why the hemispheric trade talks are proving so complex.”

[Weintraub is the author of a monthly report, “Issues in International Political Economy,” which can be accessed at: <http://www.csis.org/simonchair/index.cfm> The latest edition focuses on democracy and development. In previous issues, Weintraub covered multilateral trade agreements.]

Sherman Katz, CSIS Scholl Chair in International Business (202-775-3140; skatz@csis.org): “The possibility of an ‘a la carte’ framework to overcome strong U.S.-Brazil differences on the proper scope of an FTAA may well be the ‘least bad’ outcome of what could have been yet another setback for trade liberalization. As more nations sit at the table, whether at the WTO or in regional groupings like FTAA, and as more subjects are placed on that table, like intellectual property and investment, it may become necessary to make trade deals that allow custom-tailoring to the shape of political as well as economic conditions.”

Phillip McLean, deputy director, CSIS Americas Program (202-457-8745; pmclean@csis.org): “A watered down FTAA will be a blow not only to the U.S. trade agenda but also to U.S. standing in Latin America. Trade has been the most potent element of U.S. diplomacy ever since President George H.W. Bush put it on the inter-American agenda in 1990.”

[The Americas Program publishes the monthly “Hemisphere Highlights” (<http://csis.org/americas/index.htm>), which provides in-depth expert analysis of important hemispheric issues.]

Miguel Diaz, director, CSIS South America Project (202-775-3273; mdiaz@csis.org): “FTAA is more than a trade integration initiative, it is a litmus test of the region's ability to come together and create something of substance that can have an important developmental impact. A successful conclusion of FTAA can give impetus to cooperation in other areas of mutual interest, such the common fight against aids. A failed ministerial meeting, on the other hand, will preserve the walls of suspicion and ignorance that have kept the region from coming together in the past. In the globalized world that we live in, this is a luxury that the Americas cannot afford.”

CSIS is an independent, nonpartisan public policy research organization.