

# The Miami summit

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“C onditions for hemispheric cooperation are propitious.” A simple but forceful sentence which sums up the idea that the American continent’s heads of state brought to the Miami gathering, this also describes the conviction embodied in the declaration of principles adopted by the “Summit of the Americas.”

Organized at the initiative of U.S. President Bill Clinton, the summit was a forum for bringing together the continent’s nations and seeking alternatives for promoting the region’s development. It was held in Miami—often called “the capital of Latin America”—on December 9-11, 1994, with the attendance of 34 heads of state. Fidel Castro was not invited.

“The problems of one country are now problems of all, and they call for joint solutions,” President Clinton said in his opening speech. He characterized the gathering as the beginning of a new relationship: “The summit’s objectives are to extend free trade from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, strengthen democracy and achieve prosperity for the peoples” of the Americas.

In one of his speeches, which was repeatedly interrupted by applause, Clinton recognized that the same themes have been struck in the past; the difference, he said, is that

now the conditions exist for fulfilling these aspirations.

He added that in 1967, when the continent’s leaders met in Punta del Este, Uruguay, ten of the countries were ruled by dictatorships. “On this occasion, all of us here govern democracies.” He cited Cuba as the only country which has not embraced democratic values: “It is the only one absent,” he said.

In the days leading up to the summit some voices predicted clashes and verbal confrontations due to California’s Proposition 187, not only as a factor adversely affecting U.S.-Mexico relations but as a possible obstacle to overall accords as well. The issue was faced head-on, and the result was completely different: the question of immigrants was included in the action plans agreed on by the 34 heads of state.

On December 10 the Mexican and U.S. governments had already bilaterally agreed to prevent the controversy on this proposition from damaging relations between the two countries. Mexico’s President Ernesto Zedillo stated his concern over some political movements and even measures which limit human rights considered to be universal, such as health and education.

He said that Mexico disagrees with this kind of measure, at the same time as it recognizes that this question is an internal affair of one of the states of the U.S. He expressed gratification that the

federal government of the United States has in no way joined in this measure and, in fact, has publicly questioned Prop 187’s constitutionality.

The Miami summit concluded with a declaration of principles in which the region’s leaders committed themselves to creating the first continental free trade zone by the year 2005, eradicating extreme poverty, upholding democracy as the only system which guarantees the state of law and respect for individual freedoms, and effectively fighting official corruption. A 23-point action plan was also approved, the main points of which are:

*Free trade.* A commitment was made to go forward with negotiations to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers to the flow of commodities, by the end of the century, with the objective of forming the first continental tariff-free zone by the year 2005. As a first step, a preparatory work schedule was established for 1995 and ’96, including a ministerial meeting charged with producing a final report on the area’s economy. A section was created for energy cooperation, which should begin to function this year; other commitments covered telecommunications, tourism, science and technology.

*Health and the eradication of poverty.* It was stressed that a key element for eradicating extreme poverty in the Americas is the obligation to provide universal basic

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education, regardless of race, migratory status or social condition. The objective is that by the year 2010 the region's nations guarantee that the entire population will have received primary education and that at least 75 percent receive, or be receiving, secondary education. The promise was made to comply with international agreements for guaranteeing child health, lowering infant and maternal mortality rates, and carrying out massive vaccination campaigns. This point includes strengthening the role of women in society and promoting "micro" and small businesses.

It is worth noting that, as an additional point, the heads of state agreed to promote the creation of a special body, called the "white helmets," made up of volunteers who can travel to the neediest of the continent's countries in order to participate in literacy, technical assistance and health campaigns.

With regard to the environment, the participants made commitments for efficient use of energy, an alliance to protect bio-diversity, and the prevention and treatment of pollution.

*Drug-trafficking.* Participants underlined the importance of committing governments to the signing of international agreements for anti-drug cooperation and the promulgation of effective laws that punish money-laundering, facilitate the seizure of goods belonging to drug traffickers and obligate financial institutions to freeze traffickers' accounts. The document signed by the 34 governments acknowledges the shared responsibility of producer and consumer countries, and therefore pledges to increase collaboration aimed at reducing both supply and demand, as well as the

traffic in arms and the chemicals used in drug production.

*Human rights.* The plan of action states that a democracy is judged by the rights enjoyed by the least influential individuals, and that current judiciary systems are responsible for the lack of measures for punishing human rights abuses, which in turn leads to impunity and prevents governments from providing equal justice for all. The commitment made on this point was that measures be adopted to guarantee judicial systems' independence as well as cooperation with all inter-American and United Nations human rights agencies. Emphasis was also laid on the will to guarantee the human rights of all migrant workers and their families, as well as the most disadvantaged groups, minorities, Indians and women.

*Combating corruption.* In this regard the governments committed themselves to establishing policies for information access aimed at helping citizens scrutinize the handling of finances and the allocation of official budgetary funds. The plan establishes a commitment for oversight of the allocation of official contracts so as to prevent bribery, and stresses the need for punishment of illicit enrichment of functionaries responsible for managing public funds. Within the framework of the Organization of American States, the region's nations must facilitate extradition of corrupt officials. A commitment was also made to collaborate with national and international banking institutions in order to detect suspicious financial transactions.

#### Commitments

In line with the above, the Miami summit was an important opportunity

for an exchange of views among the representatives of the attending countries, setting the stage for negotiations viewed as the first steps towards regional integration.

It was announced that, following negotiations, Chile will be joining the North American Free Trade Agreement. The heads of state of the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Chile therefore instructed their nations' trade representatives to make the necessary preparations and to hold formal meetings as soon as possible.

Canada's Prime Minister Jean Chrétien noted that Chile will provide an example for other countries' subsequent adherence to NAFTA. President Zedillo called this a decisive step in building the prosperity of nations and the welfare of their peoples.

President Clinton characterized Mexico and Canada as good partners; he mentioned that over the past year alone 100,000 jobs were created in the U.S. due to opportunities directly produced by NAFTA. For his part, Chilean President Eduardo Frei said that summits have been shown to produce important agreements, that it is possible to join together and achieve a level of equality and respect for the sovereignty of nations.

Beyond the specific commitments undertaken at the Miami summit, there was a general feeling that the gathering highlighted the great challenge of conceiving continental development as a whole, within the framework of plurality, mutual respect and tolerance.

Up until recent years inter-American cooperation was viewed as a dream virtually lacking in foundation. Today the facts demonstrate the urgent need to go from NAFTA to AFTA—the American Free Trade Area 