Message from the Interim Executive Director

Five months ago, when I came to FOCAL in an interim capacity, I could not have imagined that the editor of FOCAL POINT would be hard put to compress FOCAL's activities into a bulletin of this size. Further entries, she said, would have to be carried over to the year 2000. The activities we are reporting on range from the Carleton University Cuba symposium, the Americas Business Forum, the Conference of the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and meetings on civil society in the Americas, to issues to be discussed at the forthcoming General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Windsor and the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. Staff have travelled in the region, the United States and in Canada, exchanging information, building networks and developing projects. One measure of this momentum is our productivity. This issue of FOCAL POINT is our 16th publication since the beginning of July.

Maintaining this pace without burnout and with humour is the result of team quality and cohesion. It also owes much to Nobina Robinson, Deputy Executive Director and Director of Policy, who will be taking over as Executive Director in mid-December. FOCAL is in good hands for the journey toward the Summit of the Americas in 2001 and beyond.

As I move back to my role of Vice Chair of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, I would like to express my appreciation to my colleagues at FOCAL and our partners for their cooperation, friendship and sobre todo, for an exhilarating experience.

John W. Graham
Interim Executive Director
Inter-American Relations

The Cuban Economy: Problems, Policies, Perspectives

Nobina Robinson and Cristina Warren participated at Carleton University’s symposium on Cuba September 29 - 30. The event was the culmination of a five-year joint Carleton University – University of Havana Master’s of Economics program which has trained Cuban economists in modern economic theory and practice, many of whom travelled to Ottawa for this occasion. In her concluding remarks, Nobina Robinson observed that this new cadre of highly adaptable and experienced Cuban economists can make a vital contribution to improving the understanding of the many adjustments Cuba will have to make in its eventual integration into the world economy. She encouraged the graduates to produce more policy relevant research, based on reliable and verifiable data, and to share their knowledge with experts in and outside of Cuba.

CALACS Conference on Latin America and the Caribbean into the Coming Millennium: Equity, Democracy and Sustainability

FOCAL organized three panels for the 1999 conference of the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) that took place at Carleton University September 30 - October 2.

FOCAL brought together George Haynal, Assistant Deputy Minister, Americas, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and Robert Anderson, Vice President, Americas Branch, Canadian International Development Agency, to discuss the challenges and issues facing Canada’s foreign policy and development strategy towards the Americas. Also on the panel were Richard Herring of the Inter-American Development Bank, Jean Daudelin of the North-South Institute, and Nobina Robinson of FOCAL.

Panellists agreed that despite the significant increase in Canada’s engagement with the Americas over the last decade, as commitment to democracy and freer markets has taken root in the region, important challenges lie ahead. Canadian interests in the Americas will only be adequately served if the region is able to consolidate its fragile democratic structure currently under strain. Regional prosperity will require reforms that move beyond economic growth to include greater social equity and human security.

John Graham of FOCAL chaired a panel on the current development challenges facing the Caribbean. Presentations were made by Gillian Gunn Clissold, Director, Georgetown University’s Caribbean Project, Andrés Serbin, President, Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Economicas y Sociales (CRIES), Winston Cox, Former Governor, Central Bank of Barbados and Robert Moore, Former High Commissioner of Guyana to Canada. Concern over globalization and its impact on the economies and societies of the Caribbean was expressed throughout the session. Although Caribbean governments have responded to globalization challenges with internal economic restructuring and a renewed emphasis on regional integration, the process has been extremely difficult and the outlook for many countries remains uncertain. Adjustments have led to increased unemployment, economic insecurity, increasing vulnerability to organized crime and rising social unrest as the region’s social safety net deteriorates.

The third panel organized by FOCAL examined various dimensions of the international relations issues facing Cuba. Cristina Warren chaired while Yvon Grenier, Saint Francis Xavier University, gave a provocative presentation in which he questioned some of the basic assumptions underpinning Canada’s policy of constructive engagement towards Cuba. Hal Klepak, Royal Military College of Canada and Senior Advisor to FOCAL, discussed current Cuban foreign and defence policy positions, outlining the Cuban government’s current strategy, its defeats and successes. Lisandro Pérez of the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University outlined the recent developments in US-Cuba relations, and the forces at play which serve as obstacles to a significant shift in US policy towards Cuba. The presentations made by Pérez and Klepak will shortly be made available as FOCAL policy papers.

The highlight of the CALACS conference was the keynote speech by Enrique Iglesias, President of the Inter-American Development Bank, who provided a comprehensive overview of the various paradigms for development in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1945. He explained that the region has been, in effect, a working laboratory for many different approaches to development, going from belief in state intervention in the 1950s and 1960s to the pure market approach of the Washington Consensus of the 1980’s and 1990s. Dr. Iglesias then signalled that the Americas have made significant advances, reducing inflation, expanding regional trade and increasing productivity, all of which point to a capacity to fully participate in a globalized economy. In explaining the emerging “post-Washington Consensus”, Dr. Iglesias said that after going to the extremes of economic management, there is now a growing convergence of opinion that an economic model is required in which states must correct market inefficiencies and social distortions. He pointed out
that the challenges to the region are to strengthen institutions, improve governance, increase participation and address social inequities.

Copies of papers from the CALACS conference may be found at www.travel-net.com/~calacs/english/conference/CI1999.html

Summit 2001 – A Joint Newsletter on the Quebec City Hemispheric Summit

FOCAL, in partnership with the Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC), Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University, has undertaken to produce a regular joint newsletter with information on the Summit of the Americas process. The SOAC/FOCAL partnership reflects the widening circles of institutions that have a stake in inter-American relations. These newsletters will provide a new source of policy-relevant thinking for the region’s decision makers. The first issue, November 1999, is available on the FOCAL and SOAC web sites (www.focal.ca and www.americasnet.net). Watch for our next issue prior to the March meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) – the principal planning forum of hemispheric governments for the Summit of the Americas. To receive a hard copy of Summit 2001, contact database@focal.ca

Organization of American States

Canada will host the 30th General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Windsor, Ontario June 4-6, 2000. FOCAL was one of five Canadian NGOs which attended the 29th General Assembly in Guatemala (see FOCAL at the OAS General Assembly on our web site.) Since then FOCAL has been following OAS developments from a variety of perspectives - meetings, placement of interns, publications and joint activities.

Nobina Robinson attended a meeting of the OAS Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management in Washington D.C. on October 12. The meeting, convened by Canada as Chair of the Committee, afforded an opportunity for civil society representatives from the hemisphere to provide their views on the implementation of Summit commitments by the OAS and by countries of the hemisphere. The agenda paralleled that of the November 1999 SIRG, and dealt with Summit action items on women, regional energy cooperation, municipal and regional administration, medium and micro-enterprises, confidence and security measures, and science and technology.

FOCAL had a rare chance to meet with partner NGOs from the region, as well as to observe the working dynamics of an official OAS meeting.

At the request of the North-South Center in Miami, Florida, Nobina Robinson returned to Washington, D.C., to speak at the launch of their book: Civil Society and the Summit of the Americas: The 1998 Santiago Summit. The document is an invaluable compendium of all civil society submissions to governments prior to and immediately after the Santiago Summit, and also includes vital reference materials for anyone interested in the Summit of the Americas process. For copies of this book, contact Robin Rosenberg of the North-South Center (rrosenbe@nsc.msnmail.miami.edu).

In November 1999, FOCAL was invited to make a presentation at the seminar Les enjeux de l’Assemblée générale de l’OEA en l’an 2000. Martin Roy addressed some of the main challenges that Canada will face at the upcoming General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) to take place in Windsor in June 2000. This seminar was held in Montreal and organized by le Conseil québécois pour l’Amérique latine (CQAL) and le Bureau de la Coopération internationale de l’Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Martin Roy helped to demystify the structure and processes of the OAS system (a multilateral organization less well-known to Canadians) for this predominantly academic audience.

Between now and June 2000 FOCAL expects to prepare policy papers and analyses of many key issues facing the OAS. Further information about the General Assembly can be obtained from the Canadian Hemispheric Summit Office web site (www.americascanada.org).

Governance and Human Security

Peru Election Web Site

In mid-October 1999, the government of Peru extended an official invitation to the Organization of American States (OAS) to observe its general election in 2000. OAS involvement in the observation of Peru’s elections began in the wake of President Alberto Fujimori’s auto-coup of April 5, 1992 which entailed the suspension of the 1979 constitution, the closure of Congress, and the dismissal of the judiciary. The government subsequently held elections for a new constituent assembly in 1992. The OAS monitored the 1992 election and has continued to monitor subsequent national and municipal elections. In all likelihood, the OAS will be joined by other international observation teams for the 2000 elections. A national citizens’ organization, Transparencia, will also be active in observation efforts.

The continuing observation of Peru’s elections is indicative of the ongoing concern in the international community about the fairness and integrity of the electoral process in Peru. In order for the international community to fully understand and evaluate the election process that will take place in Peru, attention must be paid to the conditions affecting the electoral environment in the many months prior to the election itself.
The Centre for the Study of Democracy of Queen’s University, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Dante B. Fascell North-South Center of the University of Miami are co-sponsors of the Peru Elections 2000 website (csd.queensu.ca/peru2000) which is intended to provide the public, academics, researchers, and members of the international policy community with the most current and comprehensive information on the developments that will affect Peru’s general elections in 2000.

Human Rights in a Global Perspective

John Graham was a speaker at the McGill Law School conference on Human Rights in a Global Perspective, October 14. In his presentation, he noted that in many countries, despite remarkable advances in democratization, the quality of life for the majority in Latin America and the Caribbean is eroded by corruption, the lengthening gap between wealth and poverty, the inroads of organized crime, the rise of criminal violence, the failure of judicial systems and continuing widespread human rights abuses.

Economic Integration

Openness, Sustainability and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)

The participation of civil society in the hemispheric trade negotiations and the trade-environment link are the subject of continuing controversy in the Americas. In October 1999, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, Fundación Ecos (ECOS) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) convened a workshop on Openness, Sustainability and the FTAA in Ottawa to address some of these issues which are gaining prominence in the region and the world trading system.

At the workshop, thirty participants from civil society groups, governments and intergovernmental agencies across the hemisphere gathered to deliberate upon the most feasible policy options for governments of the region to include sustainable development considerations in the FTAA policy making. They reviewed lessons learned from governmental efforts to include civil society and environmental issues in sub-regional economic integration processes, intergovernmental efforts for civil society participation, and, civil society initiatives for sustainable development and trade policy linkages. FOCAL was represented at this event by Nobina Robinson, Martin Roy and Stacey Wilson-Forsberg.

Following the workshop, FOCAL, ECOS and IISD published a policy paper titled Trade, Sustainable Development and Civil Society in Free Trade Area of the Americas: How to Make the Link which was circulated prior to the Americas Business Forum (ABF) and the FTAA Trade Ministerial that took place in Toronto on November 1-4. Among the policy options that the partners of the project developed are the need to conduct a sustainability review of the FTAA and to build on sub-regional and national civil society openness mechanisms.

Copies of this report in English and Spanish may be obtained from FOCAL web site (www.focal.ca). Both the report and the workshop were made possible thanks to the support of Environment Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (International Environmental Affairs Bureau), and the Canadian International Development Agency.

Americas Business Forum

Business leaders from throughout the hemisphere gathered in Canada to make recommendations on business facilitation and other issues at the Fifth Americas Business Forum in October 1999. More than 800 people discussed progress on Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations and produced recommendations in the areas of market access, agriculture, services, competition policy, dispute settlement, government procurement, intellectual property, investment, subsidies, anti-dumping and countervailing duties, and smaller economies. While this was the first ABF to be held in Canada, Canadian and U.S. business representatives did not actively participate in the proceedings of individual workshops themselves. On the other hand, representatives from South America made substantial contributions to this ABF, both through the submission of position papers and lively participation in workshop discussions.

As is the normal practice, the ABF was held immediately before the meeting of Trade Ministers of the hemisphere, with the purpose of providing direct input into official negotiations. At a joint plenary session, Trade Ministers received a long list of recommendations, including the total elimination of agricultural export subsidies and declaring the hemisphere a “subsidy-free zone” as a priority in establishing the FTAA.
Pierre Bouchard and Florencia Jubany were chosen as rapporteurs by the Centre for Trade Policy and Law at Carleton University for the workshops on Services and Agriculture respectively, giving FOCAL the opportunity to have first-hand insight of private sector concerns and discussions. Hemispheric business leaders will meet again in Argentina in April 2001.

Our Americas: Towards a People’s Vision of the Hemisphere – Civil Society Forum

As Trade Ministers of 34 countries gathered in Toronto to negotiate an agreement for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Hemispheric Social Alliance, a broad coalition of some 200 labour, environment, human rights and community activists from throughout the hemisphere met at the Our Americas civil society forum. The objective was to demonstrate the growing regional consensus that civil society issues (participation, social impact considerations) need a fair hearing in the FTAA negotiations. FOCAL was represented at the two day forum by Stacey Wilson-Forsberg.

The group made interventions and finalized two working documents: Investment, Finance, and Debt and Social Exclusion, Jobs, and Poverty, which provide alternative proposals and recommendations to governments to improve respect for human rights, labour standards, the environment, and democratic participation. The documents were presented to Canadian Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew who was accompanied by several (though not all) other Trade Ministers from the hemisphere on the last day of the Forum. Although the meeting between the civil society representatives and the ministers was a first, forum participants argued that the FTAA process should not be limited to a 90 minute encounter with ministers every 18 months.

The Toronto event was both an opportunity to influence Trade Ministers, but as well as an occasion for civil society representatives to share experiences and develop common strategies for future FTAA negotiations and the Seattle Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Common Frontiers is the Canadian Coordinator of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. All documents can be found on their web site: www.web.net/comfront

Social Policy

Queen’s University Institute Conference on Social Policy

Stacy Wilson-Forsberg represented FOCAL at a two day conference at the Queen’s University Institute on Social Policy. The conference drew on representatives from the public, private and academic sectors. While not region-specific, discussions did cover a variety of issues affecting the Latin America/Caribbean region including lessons learned from comparative social policy research in Latin America, international organizations and social policy and public health and population health policy. For further information on the Institute, including a summary paper from the conference, check out the web site (www.qiisp.com) or call Tim Hunsley at (613) 233-7956.

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

The Inter-American Strategy for Public Participation in Decision-Making for Sustainable Development (ISP) was formulated by the Organization of American States in response to government commitments for improved civil society participation in sustainable development initiatives at the 1996 Bolivia Summit. A consultative meeting on the ISP was held in Mexico City from September 8 - 10 bringing together government and civil society representatives to finalize the Policy Framework. At this meeting, Nobina Robinson replaced Nola-Kate Seymour of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities as the civil society business representative. Stacey Wilson-Forsberg also attended.

The final Policy Framework of the ISP should be approved by the OAS General Assembly in June 2000 and provides useful guidelines for civil society inclusion in multilateral decision making. Information on the ISP and copies of its papers may be found on the web (www.ispnet.org).
Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization

The Seattle Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (November 30 - December 2) is expected to launch a new round of trade negotiations to further liberalize international trade and to review some current trade rules. Many countries have suggested a deadline of three years for these new talks, with the decision being made by the ministers in Seattle.

The WTO negotiations will have a necessary impact on negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas – either the WTO talks will eclipse the FTAA or, in the case of an impasse in Seattle, the FTAA discussions could move ahead faster. A policy paper on the implications of this new round of global trade talks for the FTAA will be developed by FOCAL early in 2000.

Miami Conference on the Caribbean and Latin America

The 23rd annual Miami Conference on the Caribbean and Latin America will take place this year from December 7-10. The Conference agenda encompasses broad hemispheric topics, including dollarization, trade negotiations at the FTAA and WTO levels and Europe’s new presence in the Americas. Several Heads of State will make keynote presentations, including Presidents Chavez of Venezuela and Flores of El Salvador. Key players in hemispheric trade negotiations, such as Herminio Blanco, Mexican Secretary of SECOFI, will participate in plenary town meetings. FOCAL will be represented at this important hemispheric event by Pierre Bouchard.

Have You Read?

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas regularly produces policy papers, conference reports and information backgronders dealing with issues in the hemisphere. Our policy papers are the product of intensive monitoring and analysis by FOCAL’s team of experts.

Recent publications include:

Educational Reforms in the Americas - What Can Canada Contribute - A Conference Report

FOCAL 1998 Annual Report (available as PDF file from web site only)
FOCAL 99-10 ISBN 1-896301-32-0

The Rio Summit of June 1999 – Its implications for the Summit of the Americas Process
FOCAL 99-11 ISBN 1-896301-34-7

Key Upcoming Elections in Latin America and the Caribbean

Trade, Sustainable Development and Civil Society in the Free Trade Area of the Americas: How to Make the Link

SUMMIT 2001 – A Joint Newsletter on the Quebec Hemispheric Summit
Argentine after the Menem Decade

PDF copies of these publications are available for download at FOCAL’s web site (www.focal.ca). They may also be order from the Ottawa office. A pre-paid $5 postage and handling charge will apply to each order.

Coming Soon
Look for FOCAL policy papers on the Colombia Peace Process, Cuba, and other topics of importance to the hemisphere over the next few months.
Appointmen of Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is pleased to announce the appointment of Nobina Robinson as Executive Director effective December 10, 1999. Ms. Robinson has been a valued member of the FOCAL staff since joining in 1998 as Senior Policy Advisor. In July 1999 she was promoted to Deputy Executive Director and Director of Policy and has worked closely with FOCAL staff and Interim Executive Director John Graham in expanding FOCAL’s network of experts and policy makers concerned with issues facing the Latin American and Caribbean region.

In Appreciation

In announcing the appointment of FOCAL’s new Executive Directory, the Board of Directors expressed its appreciation for the great contribution John W. Graham has made as Interim Executive Director since July. In this capacity he provided valuable direction and support to FOCAL, building a strong staff and focussing the organization on the key policy challenges of the Americas.

Society for International Development – Ottawa Chapter

In September the Society for International Development (SID) invited Nobina Robinson to give a lunchtime talk on the opportunities and challenges presented by the major hemispheric events being hosted by Canada over the next eighteen months. Her comments emphasized the need to address the continuing to hemispheric integration such as trans-national violence, threats to democratic institutions and financial instability.

Delegation from Mexico’s Governing Political Party Visits FOCAL

On October 20 members of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) International Program visited FOCAL as part of an outreach program to explain the electoral process of the November 7, 1999 primary that the PRI has introduced and to discuss the PRI’s political platform. FOCAL staff asked the PRI representatives questions relating to the party’s foreign policy priorities on Canada and key hemispheric issues such as the participation of civil society in multilateral organizations.

Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS)

At its October General Meeting, Nobina Robinson was elected to the CALACS Board of Directors for a three year term. She will be working closely with Professor Jim Handy, Board President, and other directors to enhance relations between the academic and policy communities working on Latin American and Caribbean issues in Canada.

David Pollock Library

In May 1999 the Board of Directors was pleased to dedicate FOCAL’s library in honour of David Pollock, one of the founders of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas. Mr. Pollock, who had a distinguished 30 year career with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America, was also an Adjunct Professor with the Norman Paterson School for International Affairs (Carleton University) for 20 years. His contribution to FOCAL, from the beginning when he, Edgar Dosman and Richard Gorham signed the incorporation papers, to the time, ten years later, when he retired from the Board was invaluable. The David Pollock Library will continue to grow and support the policy analysis undertaken by FOCAL.

FOCAL Web Site

Please visit our redesigned web site at www.focal.ca for up-to-date information on the policy work and publications of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas. Your comments and suggestions would be appreciated. Please send them to database@focal.ca

CIDA Web Site

The Canadian International Development Agency has made available many of its publications on Latin America and the Caribbean. For a list of available documents, visit: www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/85256290006534868525625200069faa?OpenView

How to Hear from Us

To receive information about upcoming events and publications by e-mail or regular mail, send your full name and address to database@focal.ca
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[www.focal.ca](http://www.focal.ca)

Founded in 1990, the **Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL)** is an independent, not-for-profit charitable organization that is guided by a Board of Directors. As a policy centre, **FOCAL** fosters informed and timely debate and dialogue on issues of importance to decision-makers and opinion leaders in Canada and throughout the Western Hemisphere. **FOCAL**’s mission is to develop greater understanding of important hemispheric issues relating to inter-American relations, governance and human security, social policies, and economic integration. **FOCAL** monitors developments in the Americas and, working with experts, analyses emerging issues. Many of these issues are discussed at conferences and workshops organized by **FOCAL**. The discussions lead to the development of policy options and research papers that **FOCAL** brings to the attention of governments, international organizations, the private sector, the non-governmental community and the media.