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FOCAL POINT is a regular publication of the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, providing information on FOCAL’s activities to promote policy debate and dialogue on issues of significance in the Americas. The preparation and publication of this issue, as well as many of the events and publications discussed in this bulletin were made possible thanks to the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This issue covers FOCAL’s activities between December 2000 and May 2001. Further details about many of the events and activities included in this bulletin may be found on FOCAL’s web site (www.focal.ca).

Message from the Executive Director

The period covered by this newsletter, from December 2000 to May 2001, was one of unprecedented activity for FOCAL. Much of our work was centred on stimulating and contributing to an informed debate on the issues before the Canadian Summit of the Americas in April. At the same time, we continued our work on other key hemispheric issues, organizing and participating in workshops and presentations, and producing a number of Policy Papers. Space limitations prevent us from describing all of our activities, but you can find additional information by visiting our web site, www.focal.ca.

I will be on maternity leave from June 2001 to April 2002. During that period, Donald R. Mackay has agreed to assume the position of Executive Director of FOCAL. A career Foreign Service officer, Don was a member of the Canadian NAFTA negotiating team, and served over the last five years as Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States. The Board of Directors and I have every confidence that he will continue to keep FOCAL at the forefront of the debate on hemispheric issues.

In the coming months, FOCAL will define new program and policy priorities to help sustain Canadian engagement with the Americas and to contribute to civil society’s role in implementing Summit mandates. We are also planning a special focus in three areas: Canada-Colombia relations, the trilateral agenda between Canada, the US and Mexico, and legal and judicial reform in the Americas. I look forward to seeing the results of this work, and I wish everyone well until my return. My thanks go out to our staff and Board members for all of FOCAL’s accomplishments in this busy period.

Nobina Robinson
FOCAL was invited to participate in civil society discussions during the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City on April 20-22, 2001. “Official Guest Status” was given to 60 representatives from hemispheric non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, think tanks, and business associations, selected for their constructive contributions to the Summit process in the months and years leading to Quebec City. Nobina Robinson and Stacey Wilson-Forsberg represented FOCAL. Overall, the Summit served as an excellent opportunity for FOCAL to gain direct exposure to the dynamics of regional multilateralism and to meet with key hemispheric partners from governments and civil society.

The major outcomes of the Quebec City Summit were:

- the reaffirmation of political will by the Heads of State of the Americas to complete negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005;

- a commitment from international financial institutions to make available more than $56 billion in loans over the next five years to fund Summit initiatives; and

- a democracy commitment enshrined in the Quebec Declaration stating that “Any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the participation of that state’s government in the Summit of the Americas process”.

While it has yet to be tested, the purpose of the democracy commitment is to prevent a country from taking part in all aspects of the inter-American process, including talks on the free trade agreement or receiving support from the international financial institutions, in the case of a rupture in democracy.

On the second day of the Summit, FOCAL participated in a meeting, chaired by MP Bill Graham, between the invited civil society representatives, several ministers from Canada, the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and officials from Inter-American institutions and the World Bank. Discussions focused on: the need to implement the social agenda of the Summit, especially education mandates; strengthening democratic institutions and citizen participation in the hemisphere; reform of the inter-American human rights system; the concerns of business associations; and indigenous issues.

At the meeting, Nobina Robinson commended Canada for raising the benchmark for a more open and accessible Summit of the Americas and expressed the hope that Argentina will commit to further civil society consultation and inclusion at the next Summit.

With national and international media intensely focused on the Quebec City Summit, Nobina Robinson was frequently approached at the event for television, radio, and newspaper interviews. She, as well as other FOCAL staff members, provided background on the Summit of the Americas process, as well as commentary on the issues being discussed by the Heads of State. The following is a partial list of the many national and international media outlets that quoted or used FOCAL as a source for stories on the Summit:

**National Media**
- CBC Television
- CBC Radio
- Radio Canada
- The Globe and Mail
- The National Post
- Macleans Magazine

**International Media**
- The Washington Post
- Time Magazine
- The Economist
- BBC World Service
- Radio Métropole, Haiti
- O Estado do São Paulo, Brazil
- El Clarín, Argentina

The President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, with Stacey Wilson-Forsberg (l.) and Nobina Robinson (r.) at the Prime Minister’s Reception at the Summit.
FOCAL’s Contributions to the Summit Debate

In the months and days leading up the Third Summit of the Americas, FOCAL played lead roles in a wide variety of activities covering virtually every topic on the Summit agenda, as described below.

Joint Summit Newsletters, 1999-2001
Since November 1999, FOCAL and the Summit of the Americas Center of Florida International University have published seven issues of a Joint Newsletter, “Summit 2001,” with information on the Summit of the Americas. The newsletter sheds light on Canadian leadership in the Americas. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade provided funding for a full French translation of this newsletter.

FOCAL meets Latin American and the Caribbean journalists, Ottawa, April 25th, 2001
On April 25, 2001, FOCAL hosted a meeting for a group of journalists from Latin America and the Caribbean who had been invited to Canada by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). So soon after the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, discussions naturally focused on its outcome, especially regarding the defense of democracy in the hemisphere, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and further efforts needed to guarantee prosperity and equity in the region. The journalists offered informed and often critical views on these issues, engaging FOCAL staff members in a debate that could have continued long after the allotted time was up. FOCAL was glad to provide its own views, in addition to those of other Canadian interlocutors that the journalists had met previously.

FOCAL Panel on Trade and Prosperity at the “Conférence de Montréal, Challenges and Perspectives,” April 17-20, 2001
FOCAL organized a panel entitled “Trade and Prosperity at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City” on April 18, 2001, during the annual Conférence de Montréal. This initiative was made possible by the generous support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The FOCAL panel was presided over by the Honourable Maria Minna, Minister for International Cooperation, and included distinguished speakers such as José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs (Organization of American States), Inés Bustillo (Economic Commission for Latin America/Caribbean), José Augusto de la Torre (World Bank) and Al Berry (University of Toronto). Topics discussed ranged from the results of the April Buenos Aires Trade Ministerial and the divisive issue of labour standards, to the role of the private sector in creating prosperity and the crucial need to reduce financial vulnerability in the region. A recurring message from the panelists was that freer trade is only one tool to promote economic growth and investment, and that it must be complemented by appropriate education and social policies to generate lasting prosperity.

At the Conférence de Montréal (l. to r.): José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs (Chief Trade Advisor, OAS), Donald Mackay (Special Advisor, FOCAL), and Inés Bustillo (Director, Washington Office, ECLAC).

Conference on “Inter-American Cooperation Beyond Free Trade,” organized by the Institut québécois des hautes études internationales (IQHÉI) Université Laval, Quebec City, April 17-19 2001
Gerd Schönwälder and Judy Meltzer attended the conference on “Inter-American Cooperation Beyond Free Trade”, hosted by the Institut Québécois des Études Internationales at the University of Laval. The conference, which took place just prior to the Summit of the Americas 2001, brought together specialists from North and South America to look at broader issues surrounding hemispheric cooperation. These included: globalization and the media; FTAA and models of development; human rights; democracy; social and environmental clauses, as well as issues related to culture and integration.
Hemispheric Trade and Sustainability Symposium, Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City, April 17-19, 2001

José Zaragoza attended the Hemispheric Trade and Sustainability Symposium at the Musée de la civilisation in Quebec City. This three-day event was organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the World Conservative Union (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). At the conference, eminent speakers from the hemisphere discussed topics such as the Cartagena Protocol, the need for sustainable investments in trade agreements, biodiversity, drinking water and sanitation, and the role of civil society in the Americas integration process. The meeting resulted in a public statement that calls upon countries of the Americas to address environmental issues related to the FTAA by implementing a strong and integrated strategy in the field of trade and sustainable development.

FOCAL Co-Sponsors Report by Leadership Council on Inter-American Summity on Canada’s Summit of the Americas, April 12, 2001

At a meeting in Washington D.C. on April 12, 2001, the Leadership Council for Inter-American Summity released a report with recommendations on “Advancing Toward Quebec City and Beyond.” FOCAL, a member of the Leadership Council, co-sponsored this third major policy report by the Council on the successes and failures in implementing commitments made at past Summit meetings in Miami, Florida in 1994 and Santiago, Chile in 1998. The vast majority of the Leadership Council’s recommendations were incorporated in the final documents and declarations of the Summit.

FOCAL’s Vice-Chair, John Graham, with Nobina Robinson at the Summit Opening Ceremony.

VI Americas Business Forum – Buenos Aires, April 4-5, 2001

Don Mackay and Florencia Jubany attended the VI Americas Business Forum (ABF) in Buenos Aires. The meeting gathered over 1,300 business representatives from all corners of the hemisphere—a record number of participants since the first ABF in 1995. The topics discussed at 11 workshops were: market access, agriculture, subsidies, anti-dumping and countervailing duties, government procurement, competition policy, intellectual property, services, investment, dispute settlement, smaller economies and electronic commerce. Workshop discussions were complemented by plenaries on the role of the private sector in contributing to economic and social development, which revealed marked differences in the degree of social responsibility that the private sectors from each of the 34 countries have assumed.

Following established practice, the VI-ABF met immediately before the Meeting of Ministers of Trade of the Hemisphere so that business delegates were able to hand over their conclusions and recommendations to the ministers on the last day of deliberations. In addition to specific technical recommendations emerging from each workshop, delegates at the VI-ABF requested more and better information on the ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas in order to contribute more efficiently and usefully to the process.
FOCAL Addresses the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, March 27, 2001

FOCAL was invited to make a formal presentation to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on March 27, 2001. Nobina Robinson gave a general overview of the Summit process, focusing on the wider political context and the non-trade agenda, and Don Mackay shared FOCAL's position on the negotiations toward a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Ms. Robinson emphasized that FOCAL did not see the Summit as an end in itself, but rather another moment in the development of a community of the Americas. The Summit process has provided the region with a framework to collectively pursue a vast array of cooperative initiatives whether in the areas of anti-drug cooperation, anti-corruption conventions, civilian supremacy over the military, or areas of utmost importance in the social agenda such as health cooperation, education or gender rights. During the question and answer session the Members of Parliament questioned Ms. Robinson about the exclusion of Cuba from the Summit. Ms. Robinson responded that the government of Cuba does not adhere to values of hemispheric cooperation based on representative democracy, open markets, free trade, and pluralism. Don Mackay addressed concerns about the integration of smaller economies into an eventual FTAA and he dismissed fears that the FTAA negotiations would stall in the face of a new WTO round.

Panel on the Summit of the Americas at Carleton University, Ottawa, March 27, 2001

Nobina Robinson participated in a panel discussion on the Summit of the Americas at Carleton University. Ms. Robinson's presentation outlined some of the key issues on the table in Quebec City, including democracy, trade, corruption and drug trafficking, and stressed the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to deepen dialogue between hemispheric leaders. Insisting that the Summit's agenda goes well beyond trade liberalization, Ms. Robinson challenged critics of the Summit to look more closely at the process as a tool for greater hemispheric cooperation. At the same time, her presentation acknowledged the limitations of summitry and the ongoing challenge to ensure that governments implement regional initiatives, as well as the need to offer civil society organizations a greater role in hemispheric negotiations.

Dialogue on the 2001 Summit of the Americas, Calgary, March 16th, 2001

Gerd Schönwälder gave a presentation on civil society participation in inter-American summitry at the Dialogue on the 2001 Summit of the Americas, held at the Law Faculty of the University of Calgary. David Kilgour, Secretary of State for Latin America, gave the keynote speech, which was followed by panels on civil society participation in the Summit process, environmental and natural resource concerns in the context of economic integration, as well as democracy and the human rights agenda. Attended by academics, students, and the wider policy community of Calgary, the meeting was a timely opportunity to discuss the preparations for the Quebec Summit of the Americas.

Meeting of the Special Committee on Inter-American Summit Management, OAS, Washington, D.C., February 15 -16, 2001

Florence Jubany made a presentation at this meeting of the Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management of the Organization of American States (OAS) Permanent Council. Ms. Jubany delivered FOCAL's comments on Chapter 2, “Creating Prosperity,” of the Draft Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas. Participants included both OAS representatives and delegates from other civil society organizations. FOCAL's comments centred on four topics: accelerating the deadline to conclude negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and corporate social responsibility. FOCAL has submitted recommendations to all open meetings of this OAS Committee.

Canadian Institute for International Affairs (CIIA) and FOCAL Speaker Series, Ottawa, February 13, 2001

FOCAL collaborated with the Ottawa Chapter of the CIIA in February for a dinner discussion with Canadian Summit Sherpa, Marc Lortie. Mr. Lortie briefed the audience of 80 guests on the state of negotiations for the April Summit, and on Canada’s policy priorities for this event.

Conclusions of the Civil Society Consultation Process for the Quebec City Summit, Miami, January 18-20, 2001

In January, Gerd Schönwälder and Stacey Wilson-Forsberg participated in the Final Hemispheric Meeting of Civil Society Consultations in preparation for the Quebec City Summit of the Americas. Gerd Schönwälder gave a presentation on recent experiences with civil society participation at the hemispheric level and made closing remarks. “Citizen Participation: From Santiago to Quebec City” is an initiative developed by Corporación
Participa of Chile, in partnership with the Esquel Group Foundation (USA) and FOCAL, in order to promote constructive dialogue and collaboration between civil society organizations and governments in the hemisphere preparation for the April 2001 Summit. Civil society consultations were held in 18 countries of the region in order to submit proposals to governments on established agenda items of the Quebec City Plan of Action, including: strengthening civil society, human rights, transparency, free trade, and education.

The results of these national consultations were discussed at the meeting in Miami. Participants included civil society organizations that led the national consultations, civil society thematic networks, and representatives of international cooperation organizations, along with government representatives (the national coordinators of the Summit Implementation Review Group, ambassadors to the OAS, and other officials involved in Summit preparations). The two-day event promoted the incorporation of civil society proposals into the official Summit negotiations, but even more importantly, it facilitated constructive dialogue amongst civil society representatives and between civil society and government officials within the framework of the Summit process.


The Inter-American Dialogue and FOCAL co-hosted a day-long conference on the Summit in December. FOCAL’s Vice-Chair John Graham co-chaired the day’s session with Dialogue President Peter Hakim, and Gerd Schönwälder attended as a participant. Participants analyzed the accomplishments and failures of the first two Summits, considered the agenda and objectives for the Canadian Summit, and speculated on the relationship between the Summit and the OAS. Senior Canadian officials including Assistant Deputy Minister for the Americas, George Haynal, the Personal Representative of the Prime Minister for the Summit, Marc Lortie, and Canada’s Permanent Representative to the OAS, Peter Boehm, all took part in the day’s discussions, outlining key Canadian policy priorities to their Washington-based audience.

Meeting of the Leadership Council for Inter-American Summitry, Washington D.C., December 5, 2000

Gerd Schönwälder participated in a meeting of the Leadership Council for Inter-American Summitry in Washington D.C. on December 5, 2000, co-sponsored by the North-South Center of the University of Miami and FOCAL. Discussions revolved around a number of papers examining the implementation of previous Summit mandates, in fields such as the fight against drugs, human security, anti-corruption initiatives, women’s rights, and sustainable development. See above for details about the subsequent report, "Advancing Toward Quebec City and Beyond", issued by the Leadership Council on April 12, 2001.

Spotlight on FOCAL Events

“Canadian Media Coverage of the Americas,” Carleton University, Ottawa, March 2, 2001

A public workshop on Canadian media coverage of the Americas was organized by FOCAL and co-sponsored by Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication on March 2, 2000. The meeting was made possible with the generous support of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD). The event was held seven weeks before the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and thus presented a timely opportunity to bring together journalists, editors and producers from the Canadian and Latin American media, as well as policy analysts and academics specializing in Latin American affairs. Participants discussed past and present Canadian media coverage of the Americas, and looked ahead to key upcoming regional issues.
Among the key conclusions and policy options taken from the meeting were:

- For regional coverage to improve and deepen, leadership and commitment on the part of news “gatekeepers” (i.e. editors and producers) is essential. This would include increased assignments of journalists to cover the region, and the eventual establishment of correspondents and bureaus based in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Canadians and Canadian organizations need to express their desire for greater international media coverage more vocally to news gatekeepers. Editors are swayed by public pressure, and will respond if a strong desire for deepened regional coverage is expressed.

- NGOs, policy centres and academics can play a critical role in improving coverage by providing journalists with information on key hemispheric issues. Groups with regional expertise should become more proactive in dealing with the media by suggesting stories and providing background information along with contacts. Policy groups could also release statements to the press on key issues to facilitate the work of journalists.

On February 8, 2001, FOCAL hosted a Speaker Series event on the Guatemalan peace process with Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations. Ambassador Rosenthal has had a distinguished career as a development economist and was the Executive Secretary of the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for nearly a decade. He has also served as Minister of Guatemala’s National Planning Secretariat, and was a member of the Oversight Commission of the Guatemalan Peace Process. Ambassador Rosenthal’s presentation began with an overview of the wide-ranging and ambitious series of accords that brought a negotiated resolution to Guatemala’s brutal civil war. This process culminated in the signing of a final peace agreement on December 29, 1996. While acknowledging the many shortcomings that have plagued the peace process, Ambassador Rosenthal stressed that Guatemala has made undeniable progress over the past five years. In particular, political violence has receded markedly and the truth regarding what happened during the civil war is slowly emerging and being discussed in the country. He noted that Guatemala has become more democratic, that the press is increasingly independent, and that civil society organizations have taken advantage of newly opened spaces to advance their interests. Among the most notable setbacks to the peace process, however, have been:

- first, the defeat of the May 1999 plebiscite on constitutional reforms, including a recognition of indigenous rights and strong limitations on military involvement in internal affairs; and

- second, the murder of Archbishop Juan Gerardi in 1998 two days after he had released a report on human rights abuses during the civil war. Gerardi’s murderers have yet to be brought to trial, and the event was proof of the continued presence of reactionary groups opposed to peace and reconciliation in the country.

“Assessing the Guatemalan Peace Process” with Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Ottawa, February 8, 2001

On February 8, 2001, FOCAL hosted a Speaker Series event on the Guatemalan peace process with Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations. Ambassador Rosenthal has had a distinguished career as a development economist and
Ambassador Rosenthal stressed that the peace process can neither be considered a total success nor a failure. Generally things are moving in the right direction, although slower than most Guatemalans would like. He admitted that the lack of progress on a number of peace initiatives, coupled with economic recession and growing crime rates, has led to frustration within the general population. While the Ambassador was optimistic that the coming years would see a deepening of peace and democracy in Guatemala, he admitted that the gains made so far are not irreversible and stressed that continued national and international commitments were vital.

Where Else Has FOCAL Been?

The following are highlights of some of FOCAL’s other activities between December 2000 and May 2001. Full reports on all activities can be found on our web site, www.focal.ca.

Public Policy Forum Executive Study Tour, Ottawa, May 9, 2001

On May 9, 2001 FOCAL was invited to brief 20 public servants from federal and provincial governments preparing to travel to Washington D.C. and Mexico City to study Canada’s bilateral and trilateral relations with its North American neighbours. Nobina Robinson shared FOCAL’s thoughts on the new Fox Administration in Mexico and highlighted the key messages that President Fox and his Cabinet Members have been bringing to Canada. Ms. Robinson put special emphasis on the fact that the Mexican President has a vision for his country and she questioned whether Canada has the confidence, resources, and political will to accompany Mexico in its many transitions. Participants asked for information on topics such as: the complexities involved in passing legislation through a divided Congress in Mexico and changing the country’s Constitution to accommodate some reforms; and how the Mexican government will find the resources to implement such drastic policy changes. Gerd Schönwälder and Stacey Wilson-Forsberg accompanied Nobina Robinson to address specific questions relating to the Canada-Mexico bilateral relationship.

Fifth Annual Peacebuilding Consultations, Ottawa, May 4th, 2001

Judy Meltzer attended the Fifth Annual Peacebuilding Consultations May 4th, 2001 at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, organized by the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC). She participated as a resource person at the Session on Colombia. The Consultations provide a forum for joint dialogue on government and NGO peacebuilding initiatives, with the aim of promoting a more cohesive approach. The focus of the session on Colombia was the degradation of the conflict and its impact on the region, particularly the challenges that it presents for the international community. The presentations and ensuing discussion provided a useful overview of the status of the peace process and Canadian participation, as well as highlighting ongoing challenges to peace and democracy in Colombia.

Conference on Changing Governance and Public Sector Reform in Latin America, Ottawa, May 1-2, 2001

Nobina Robinson and Gerd Schönwälder participated in the Conference on Changing Governance and Public Sector Reform in the Americas, held in Ottawa on May 1 and 2, 2001 and organized by the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD). FOCAL had been contracted by CCMD to assist in the organization of the conference, given its expertise in hosting similar events and its extensive network of contacts in the hemisphere. Nobina Robinson also gave a presentation on Civil Society and Citizen Engagement in the Americas, focusing on the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. The event underlined the importance of reforming public sector governance in the Americas.

Mexican President Vicente Fox Meets With Canadian Civil Society Representatives

Nobina Robinson and Stacey-Wilson Forsberg were invited to attend a meeting between Mexican President Vicente Fox and Canadian civil society representatives in Ottawa on April 19, 2001. Facilitated by Mexico’s Minister of the Environment, Victor Lichtinger, the meeting gave some 30 representatives from non-governmental organizations, academic institutes, and think tanks the opportunity to express questions and concerns about a number of social, economic, and political issues in Mexico. Labour rights, trade, education, freedom of expression, and cultural diversity were the topics of particular interest to the participants. Nobina Robinson commended President Fox on the commitment to civil society inclusion in policy making demonstrated by the new Mexican government. She posed a question related to Mexico’s foreign policy toward Cuba, and invited Mr. Fox to elaborate on his initiative to establish a development fund within future free trade agreements.
During the discussion, President Fox shared his views on democracy, human rights, the rule of law, development, and economic prosperity in Mexico and the wider hemisphere.

During President Fox’s State visit, Nobina Robinson attended a dinner in his honour hosted by Her Excellency the Governor General at Rideau Hall. FOCAL’s Vice-Chair, John Graham, also attended a dinner for President Fox hosted by the Prime Minister at the Museum of Civilization.

FOCAL Meets with Mayors from El Salvador

On March 27, 2001, Gerd Schönwälder, John Graham and James Buchanan met with a delegation of five Salvadoran mayors at the offices of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The mayors represented COMURES, a national association of which all 262 municipalities in the country are members on a voluntary basis. The delegation was in Canada to raise awareness of the role of local governments in El Salvador’s post-earthquake reconstruction efforts, and to discuss COMURES’ proposal to the Salvadoran national government requesting long-term capacity building at the local level and increased authority for municipalities to manage reconstruction efforts.

Roundtable on Human Rights in Guatemala with Paul Seils of CALDH

On March 12, 2001, FOCAL hosted an informal roundtable discussion with Paul Seils, Legal Director and Coordinator of the Justice and Reconciliation Department at the Centre for Legal Action on Human Rights (CALDH) in Guatemala. Mr. Seils was in Ottawa to raise awareness for the work of the CALDH to investigate cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in over 60 indigenous communities in Guatemala during the country’s internal conflict. Twenty-three of these communities have now decided to press charges against the high commands of the regimes led by former Generals Lucas García and Rios Montt from 1981 to 1983.

Mr. Seils spoke of the many difficulties involved in pursuing such cases, including physical threats against witnesses and investigators, as well as a tradition of impunity towards human rights abusers within the justice system. Mr. Seils did acknowledge, however, that much progress has been made since the signing of peace accords in 1996, and pointed to a handful of successful prosecutions against former military officials as a sign that human rights abusers may be brought to trial successfully.

Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies Congress, Antigua, Guatemala, February 22–24, 2001

Stacey Wilson-Forsberg presented key points from FOCAL’s policy paper “High Expectations for Mexico: Responding to the Priorities of a New Government” at the 2001 Congress of the Canadian Association of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CALACS) in Antigua, Guatemala. Held every 18 months, the CALACS congresses provide an opportunity for researchers, instructors, students, government officials, and others interested in Latin American and Caribbean studies to exchange ideas and to present their research findings. Topics at this year’s congress included strengthening democracy; community, environment and development; indigenous rights and movements, gender issues, Latin American literature and history; economic development, business and trade; and politics and international relations. Congress attendees welcomed the participation of Guillermo O’Donnell and his keynote address entitled “Reflections on the Contemporary Democracies of Latin America”. This was the first year that the CALACS congress took place outside of Canada.

FOCAL meets the Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), Ottawa, January 15, 2001

Responding to an invitation by CCC’s President Douglas Patrignin, Nobina Robinson, Gerd Schönwälder and Florencia Jubany met with CCC staff doing business in Latin America and the Caribbean to provide a presentation on FOCAL’s outlook for the region. FOCAL’s briefing was followed by a lively discussion on issues such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas process and corruption, and on countries of interest to the CCC like Brazil, Chile and Cuba. The Canadian Commercial Corporation is an agency of the Government of Canada which provides export sales services and support to the Canadian private sector.

Presentation on “Agenda: PERÚ” by Francisco Sagasti and Max Hernández, Ottawa, January 10, 2001

On January 10, 2001, FOCAL and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) co-hosted a public presentation by Dr. Francisco Sagasti and Dr. Max Hernández at IDRC. Dr. Sagasti, the President of FORO Nacional/Internacional, a Peruvian institution focusing on development issues, and Dr. Hernández, a leading psychoanalyst and historian, presented the findings of Agenda: PERÚ, a seven-year project on social and political issues in Peru. The objective of the project is to create and promote spaces for public debate, and to engage a wide range of groups in meaningful debate to improve the prospects for democratic governance and good government.
The presentation addressed a wide range of current issues in Peru, including strategies to reform state institutions, to advance sustainable development policies, and to ensure that all societal groups are included in policy-making processes. Drs. Sagasti and Hernández also touched upon recent developments in the country, including the current political scene leading up to the general elections in the Spring of 2001.

“A Positive Agenda For Brazil-Canada Relations”, São Paulo, December 5, 2000

Florencia Jubany was invited to speak at a seminar on Brazil-Canada Relations organized by the Centre for the Study of International Negotiations at the University of São Paulo, on December 5, 2000. The event brought together a small group of international relations and trade specialists from Brazil and Canada to brainstorm on possible ways to increase cooperation in order to improve bilateral relations, which have been soured by the trade dispute over aircraft subsidies. The meeting provided an opportunity for academic and private sector representatives to examine the participation of Canada and Brazil in the hemispheric integration process as well as in multilateral initiatives at the UN; and to exchange ideas on the building of an agenda for bilateral cooperation and liaison in the Americas. Florencia Jubany made a presentation on past results of the bilateral relationship, and ways of working toward a positive agenda for Canada-Brazil relations. Her remarks drew from FOCAL’s ongoing work on the subject, including its Policy Paper, “Getting Over the Jet Lag: Canada-Brazil Relations 2001.”

FOCAL’s Youth International Internship Program

FOCAL is implementing for the third year the Youth International Internship Program, which is financed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This year there are 12 internships available, which FOCAL will assign to Inter-American organizations based in Washington, D.C., such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). FOCAL’s Junior Professional Trainees will begin their internship by September 2001.

Further information about the program and how to apply can be found on FOCAL’s web site, www.focal.ca. The deadline for applications is June 15, 2001.

Have You Read?

FOCAL regularly produces Policy Papers and information backgrounders dealing with hemispheric issues. All FOCAL publications are available on our web site: www.focal.ca.

Recent publications are:

2001

The Lagos Presidency: An Assessment of the Election and its Impact on Canada-Chile Relations – Author Philip Oxhorn

FPP-01-1 SBN: 1-896301-56-8

High Expectations for Mexico: Responding to the Priorities of a New Government


“Getting Over the Jet-Lag” Canada-Brazil Relations 2001


Summit 2001 Newsletter No. 5 – January 2001

Summit 2001 Newsletter No. 6 – March 2001

Environmental Security and Governance in the Americas – Author Eric Dannenmaier

Board of Directors

Board of Directors’ Meeting, December 2000

The FOCAL Board of Directors held its bi-annual meeting in Ottawa on December 8, 2000. Directors were pleased to welcome Anthony Tattersfield to the Board, and appointed him Treasurer.

There were a number of Committee reports presented to the Board. Meriel Bradford provided information to the Board on her activities as Chair, Monica Gruder Drake reported on FOCAL’s July meeting of the Forum of Hemispheric Experts and Joseph Lloyd-Jones presented the 2001 budget, which was approved by the Board. The FOCAL Board sees the establishment of stable, long term funding as a major challenge, and undertook to commission a study to look at various sources of financial support.

The Board expressed its pleasure with the quality and quantity of analytical Policy Papers FOCAL had undertaken since June 2000, and congratulated Nobina Robinson, Executive Director and the FOCAL staff for continued excellent work. As at past meetings, the Board concluded with an issues-review session with the FOCAL policy staff, where issues facing the hemisphere and FOCAL programming were discussed. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will take place on June 11, 2001.

Prosperity and Business Ethics – The Case for Corporate Social Responsibility in the Americas – Author Wesley Cragg

The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism: Is Evaluation of Anti-Drugs Efforts Sufficient? – Author Eduardo A. Gamarra

Local Government and Economic and Social Change in Cuba – Author Haroldo Dilla Alfonso

Central America: The Difficult Road Towards Integration and the Role of Canada – Authors Luis G. Solis, Patricia Solano

2000

Monetary Options for the Americas

Summit 2001 Newsletter No. 4 – November 2000

FOCAL Point November 2000

Guatemala Under the FRG: Peace at a Crossroads

Coming Soon

In the coming months, look for FOCAL Policy Papers on Haiti, Social Sciences in Cuba, and A Social Policy Primer for the Americas. Summit Newsletter 2001 No. 7 will also be published in the near future.

FOCAL hosted the Ottawa launch of Brian Stevenson’s new book at the National Press Club on March 15, 2001. Mr. Stevenson is currently Associate Vice-President (International) and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Business at the University of Alberta, and valued member of FOCAL’s Board of Directors. Invitees to the event included the local diplomatic community, academics, the media, government officials, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The President of the University of Alberta Roderik Fraser, and Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa, David Kilgour, were two guests of note.

Brian Stevenson’s book will be a significant contribution to the deepening of Canada’s relationship with the Americas since it provides a comprehensive analysis of the roots of this engagement. The book will also be a vital source of reflection as Canada designs its post-Summit strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean.

FOCAL will remain engaged with the Americas after the Summit in Quebec City is over, and we are especially pleased that our own work will benefit from the insights of Brian Stevenson. Books can be ordered through Octopus Books, 613-233-2589, octopusbooks@cyberus.ca

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(l. to r): Nobina Robinson, George Haynal (Assistant Deputy Minister, Americas, DFAIT), and Brian Stevenson.
Comings and Goings

FOCAL was pleased to welcome Donald R. Mackay as Special Advisor in March 2001. Mr. Mackay will assume the position of Executive Director of FOCAL during Nobina Robinson’s maternity leave from June 2001 to April 2002. Judy Meltzer joined FOCAL as Policy Analyst in January 2001. Judy is leading FOCAL’s policy work on Colombia’s peace process. Two other welcome additions were Sharon O’Regan, who became Manager, Finance and Administration in April 2001, and Claudia Paguaga, Intern Coordinator, who joined FOCAL in March 2001. Laurie Chochinov joined Carleton University in February 2001 after three years at FOCAL. Her contributions have improved FOCAL’s administrative and financial systems. James Buchanan re-located to Montreal in May 2001. His diligence and analytical skills will be sorely missed at FOCAL. We thank Laurie and James for their dedication, and wish them well in the future.

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How to Contact 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 or contact us at focal@focal.ca

FOCAL’s Calendar of Hemispheric Events is one of the many resources to be found at the FOCAL website www.focal.ca. The site is regularly updated with information on important hemispheric issues.
The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) is an independent policy centre based in Ottawa that works to develop greater understanding of important issues in the Americas, and promotes hemispheric cooperation and integration.

To achieve this, we engage in debate and dialogue with all participants in the policy community in Canada and throughout the Americas.

FOCAL’s discussions and in-house expertise result in policy and research papers that we bring to the attention of governments, international organizations, the private sector, the non-governmental community and the media.

We focus our policy analysis on five issue areas that are of concern to decision makers and opinion leaders throughout Canada and the Western Hemisphere: Inter-American Relations, Economic Integration, Social Policy, Governance and Human Security, and The Research Forum on Cuba.

Founded in 1990, FOCAL is a not-for-profit organization and a registered charity. We receive funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency and other public and private sector organizations, including the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the International Development Research Centre, the Ford Foundation, and the Organization of American States.