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Canada's Spotlight on the Americas

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World Bank loans to help Argentina, Mexico fight flu

The World Bank is making funds available to combat the spread of the swine flu virus.

Mexico, the country in which the powerful flu strain first appeared, has been hit the hardest by the illness. The World Bank loaned Mexico \$25.6 million on April 30, part of \$205 million it has pledged to help Mexican authorities combat the illness. Funds will go toward treating and testing for the potentially lethal flu.

Argentina received a smaller loan of \$1.5 million from the World Bank's Essential Public Health Functions funding. Argentina will use the money for treatments and "laser detectors" to screen airport passengers to prevent the spread of the illness. The swine flu became a cause for international concern when it first appeared in Veracruz on March 18.

Caribbean Faces Economic Challenges After the Fifth Summit of the Americas

José Raúl Perales

As the first hemispheric summit to be held in a Caribbean island nation, the Fifth Summit of the Americas generated much anticipation among regional governments and private sectors.

The presence of U.S. President Barack Obama, in his first meeting with his hemispheric counterparts, was the focus of attention for Caribbean audiences. Just as important was the possibility of bringing Caribbean perspectives to bear on a variety of issues that affect the entire continent—from security and climate change to the effects of the global financial crisis. On these accounts, the Summit was a resounding success for the region. President Obama committed to meet with CARICOM leaders later in the year to discuss ways of improving U.S.-Caribbean relations, and the Summit called attention to the particular challenges the small states of the region face in terms of issues such as climate change and public security.

This optimistic outlook contrasts sharply with the economic backdrop in which the Summit took place. The small open economies of the Caribbean are extremely reliant on export markets and foreign capital, at a time when global trade has contracted for the first time since the end of World War Two and capital flows are diminishing.

The two mainstays of most Caribbean economies —financial services and tourism— have been seriously affected by the global financial crisis. Tourism

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Note from the Editor — Summit Must Be Relevant, Open, Responsive

The Fifth Summit of the Americas paled in importance with comparison to the challenges facing the Western Hemisphere brought on by the economic and social fall-out of the financial crisis.

The Summit had the opportunity to address those challenges, but as Francine Jacomé writes, it “focused on the formal approval” of a Declaration “that had very little to do with current affairs.” Indeed, one of the lessons to be learned from the Fifth Summit is that international leaders’ gatherings need to be relevant in order to be useful.

A sure test of relevance is whether the outcome of the meeting goes beyond the photo opportunities and media releases and has an impact on the people these leaders represent. The G-20 meeting the week before sought to meet that test by focusing on the crisis. The Fifth Summit’s attempt to meet the test was to re-capitalize the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), an initiative in which Canada played an important leadership role through its contribution. Despite this effort, the Fifth Summit is not likely to be remembered as an important turning point in improving democratic governance or building the region’s capacity for innovation and economic development, let alone preserve the environment.

With the lonely signature of Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Patrick Manning on the Declaration, it appears to be time for Canada to pursue more vigorously alternate means of engaging with the Americas. José Raúl Perales writes about how the Caribbean is looking forward to building its trade relationship with the United States of President Barack Obama; Canada ought to advance its own trade negotiations with the

Caribbean Community before it loses the opportunity that the previous U.S. president’s neglect of the region offered.

Canada also ought to take seriously the recommendations that emerged from the private sector forum at the Fifth Summit. The engaged private sector, much like the region’s civil society, had hopes going into the Summit that something concrete would emerge from the Port of Spain Declaration. Even if this does not manifest itself through Declaration implementation, Canada has an opportunity to show leadership by enhancing the availability of credit to the region’s small and medium enterprises, boosting productive capacity in key sectors, and enhancing opportunities for innovation and the use of Information and Communication Technologies. Canada can and should seek out allies within the region such as Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, as well as work through regional bodies such as the IDB and the Organization of American States (OAS) to accomplish this.

The missing piece is civil society engagement and democratic development. Since the idea of an Inter-American Democratic Charter was introduced at the Quebec Summit of the Americas in 2001 and its adoption at a special session of the OAS on September 11, 2001, democratic governance seems to have slipped as a priority on the regional agenda. This is where civil society best comes into play, with its grassroots networks, analysis and ability to mobilize the public. Yet at this Summit, Andrea Sanhueza of the Active Democracy Network says that civil society did not have the open access to the most recent texts of the Declaration that was required for them to be effective participants in the process.

Democratic participation of citizens entails risks and the hosting government of the next Summit as well as the other governments in the region need to take those risks for a more fruitful dialogue and relationship with civil society. This is how the next Summit can be a relevant and useful tool for policy dialogue and engagement in the Western Hemisphere. 

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Caribbean Economic Challenges *(continued from page 1)*

revenues have seriously contracted in countries such as the Bahamas, where hotel chains have been forced to reduce their labor force as the number of tourist arrivals declines.

Although Caribbean banks stayed away from the riskier financial products at the center of the crisis, global financial institutions have an active presence in the region and thus leave open several possible contagion channels. For instance, given the credit squeeze Caribbean economies may confront domestic liquidity problems and thus a rise in interest rates.

Moreover, foreign capital inflows, especially remittances, will probably continue to drop, thus presenting a real danger for many countries in the region that finance their current account deficits through such flows and through foreign borrowing. Indeed, because of high debt-to-GDP levels, many governments in the region have little room for further indebtedness, thus raising the urgency of fiscal reforms and other drastic measures to confront the crisis.

The severity of the challenges the Caribbean confronts calls for renewed regional coordination and concerted action, not just to respond to the crisis, but also to advance on several policy areas that lay the bases for a sustained recovery and growth. One such area is trade. Recent reports from the World Bank and the Organization of American States have highlighted the slow decline in Caribbean competitiveness, the result of product concentration, infrastructure constraints, tariff structure, and several other variables. The Caribbean's traditional reliance on preferential access to European and

North American markets has not led to greater or improved trade performance nor to fast economic growth similar to that experienced by other small, export-oriented economies.

Yet the changing global and regional trade environment offer important opportunities for the region. In spite of controversy over some of its provisions and their implications for consolidation of the single market, the recently concluded Economic Partnership Agreement with Europe widens the scope of liberalized commercial activity to include Caribbean services. Due to the region's comparative advantage in this sector, the EPA may enable the Caribbean to fully exploit these advantages in the context of a coherent and coordinated trade policy strategy.

A similar arrangement with the United States may be in the region's best interests. In spite of the recent renewal of the Caribbean Basin Initiative unilateral preferences, the current scheme does not reflect the region's current competitive advantages or long term economic growth potential. Nor does the current arrangement address the myriad issues in the bilateral relationship, such as regulation of financial services and offshore finance, public security and transnational crime, and disaster management, that have direct economic ramifications for the Caribbean. In this sense, in spite of the financial crisis and widespread reservations about ambitious trade policy goals, the current juncture seems like a propitious moment to study a new trade relationship with the Caribbean's most important trade and investment partner.

As the current administration of President Obama seems less inclined to follow the traditional free trade agreement model of its predecessors, not to mention impending Congressional revisions of current preferential trade schemes, the possibility of a different type of reciprocal trade agreement between CARICOM and the United States ought to be on the Caribbean's agenda when it meets with President Obama later this year. The negotiation of this agreement could provide the Caribbean with an important opportunity to rethink its overall trade strategy and achieve higher levels of regional coordination in a very sensitive policy area of the CARICOM.

These are necessary conditions for the consolidation of the Caribbean's single market and economy project, not to mention a fundamental angle in the region's pursuit of a more advantageous and competitive position in a recovered global economy. 

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Information, Participation, Implementation: Three Concepts Missing from the Fifth Summit

Andrea Sanhueza

After participating in the civil society forum and the dialogue with foreign affairs ministers in the days leading up to the recently-held Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, the first thing that must be highlighted is the frustration and irritation that we representatives of civil society organizations experienced during those days.

The Civil Society Forum was held April 14-16, and involved the participation of approximately 250 people from a large number of the countries in the Americas. It was a great achievement to have such broad, active participation from representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) from the Caribbean islands. The Dialogue between civil society and the foreign ministers was held the morning of April 17, with the official inauguration of the Summit taking place later that same day. Thus, the participation of civil society ended when the meeting between presidents and government delegates began.

Regrettably, there are numerous reasons for our disagreement with the way the Forum was carried out. Prior to the Forum, it was necessary to register and receive accreditation from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. After sending the required information, it was impossible for many organizations to receive confirmation, a situation that

several groups also faced upon their arrival in the country to participate in the Forum. This is a logistical as opposed to substantive aspect, but one that created uncertainty and ill feeling, which affected the mood of participants arriving at the forum.

A second aspect, both political and substantive in nature, is that participating organizations had no access to the latest versions of the Declaration, which is the most important document of any Summit as it incorporates the commitments acquired by governments during the meeting. According to international standards, any government declaration is public information, including its drafts and preliminary versions. Access to information is a fundamental human right, and is also required to exercise other rights, such as the right to civic participation in matters of public interest. It is precisely such matters of public interest that the Summits are designed to address through multilateral political dialogue.

This same lack of information regarding the draft version of the Declaration characterized the Civil Society Forum held in early March in Washington, D.C., leading up to the Civil Society Forum in Trinidad and Tobago. The objective of the earlier meeting was to finalize the outstanding process of sub-regional fora carried out by the Organization of American States (OAS). Despite

having delivered a letter to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago requesting the draft Declaration, this document was not made available, constituting an act of secrecy, rather than transparency.

We all know that it is possible to obtain the draft Declaration from certain governments, certain officials of the Organization of American States (OAS) and on certain websites. If we wish to see progress in the possibility of exercising our rights while institutionalizing the participation of CSOs in the Summit Process, however, overcoming this situation is of the utmost importance.

The third great failing was the near zero autonomy of CSOs in defining the agenda of the Civil Society Forum in Trinidad and Tobago. According to local organizers, the dialogue with the government was complicated and interrupted, with serious difficulty in accessing information on the number and profiles of the participants, which is vital to organizing the debate. Finally, the topics and agenda of the Forum drew very little on the previous participative process. This meant interrupting the earlier process and beginning anew the discussion on proposals to present to the foreign ministers, wasting time and demotivating participants in the process.

The fourth great shortcoming was the manner in which the Gov-

ernment of Trinidad and Tobago organized the participation of CSOs in the Dialogue with the foreign ministers, a dialogue that also included participants from the private, youth and indigenous sectors. We were initially told that only ten representatives from the Forum could attend, but after insisting on the same conditions for participation as in the other Forums, we were finally allowed to include 40 representatives. The following day when the dialogue with the foreign ministers began, half of the room was empty.

As a representative of the Active Democracy Network, I was charged with presenting to the foreign ministers and representatives of government the proposals put forth in the forum on institutionalization of participation in the Summit Process and the importance of improving the process for following up on implementation of the acquired mandates.

The proposals presented were as follows:

- **Develop a clear, ongoing strategy for civil society participation in the inter-American system.** Institutionalized government-civil society dialogue must be established at the national, sub-regional and hemispheric levels, geared toward debating the main challenges facing the region, with particular emphasis on influencing commitments acquired by governments during Summits and their implementation thereafter.

- **Disseminating at a national level the agreements adopted during the Summits of the Americas.** It is vitally important for the citizenry to be informed regarding the agreements and commitments acquired by their governments.

- **Implement an effective mechanism to follow up on and promote government compliance.** In this regard, give political and financial support to the OAS so that it may fulfil this role, and promote collaborative alliances with civil society organizations experienced in the construction of pertinent methodologies, such as the Active Democracy Network and its Evaluation of Government Compliance Index (EGCI), among others.

Several governments supported these proposals in subsequent remarks. As noted by Hazel Brown, representative of the Network of

NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago, “the two words taken from this Summit must be participation and implementation.”

Let us hope that these concepts inspire decision-making by governments, as the Summits process must serve to strengthen its relevance and legitimacy among government actors themselves, as well as among political and societal stakeholders.



Andrea Sanhueza is the Executive Director of PARTICIPA and Hemispheric Coordinator of the Active Democracy Network.

Scotiabank committed to Latin America, Caribbean

Scotiabank’s executive vice president for Latin America, Anatol von Hahn, said his bank is committed to Latin America and the Caribbean in good times and bad.

“A strategic decision was made that we will work with these countries in the tough times [and] want to be there in good times,” he told the *Latin Business Chronicle*. “Now in 2009, they’re going through a bad time.”

“Our organization is almost 177 years old [and] we had an office in Jamaica before Toronto,” he said. In the Sixties, Scotiabank set up its first representative offices in Buenos Aires, Caracas, Mexico City and Sao Paulo, even though there was not a lot of investment in Latin America at the time. Scotiabank weathered the debt crisis in the Eighties in part because it had diversified holdings in Asia.

In the Nineties, Scotiabank acquired banks in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Central America and the Caribbean and is confident it can weather this crisis, too. The Canadian free trade agreement with Peru matches key sectors between the two countries’ economies.

“We consider ourselves as a NAFTA bank,” he says. “Many companies that are strong players in NAFTA in fishing and mining are strong players in Peru as well.” Canada’s trade with Peru, its third-largest trade partner in Latin America, reached CDN\$2.8 billion (US\$2.6 billion) last year, an increase of 16 per cent from 2007, according to a *Latin Business Chronicle* analysis of data from Statistics Canada.

The recent signing of the Central American Free Trade Agreement with the United States will help countries such as Costa Rica to grow, too. Mexico and Chile are also well placed to continue to grow, despite the economic crisis.

Información, Participación e Implementación: Tres Conceptos Ausentes de la Quinta Cumbre

Andrea Sanhueza

Luego de haber participado en el foro de la sociedad civil y del diálogo con los cancilleres los días previos al inicio de la Cumbre de las Américas recientemente realizada en Trinidad y Tobago, lo primero que es necesario destacar es la frustración y la incomodidad que los representantes de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil experimentamos durante esos días.

El Foro de la Sociedad Civil se realizó los días 14, 15 y 16 de abril con la participación de aproximadamente 250 personas provenientes de gran parte de los países de las Américas. Fue un gran logro el contar con una amplia y activa participación de representantes de organizaciones de la sociedad civil de las islas del Caribe. El 17 en la mañana se realizó el diálogo entre la sociedad civil y los cancilleres y la inauguración oficial de la cumbre fue en la tarde del mismo día 17. De esta forma, la participación de la sociedad civil terminó cuando la cita de los presidentes y delegados de gobierno comenzó.

Las razones de nuestra incomodidad con la forma de llevar adelante el Foro, desgraciadamente son varias.

En forma previa a la realización del Foro había que inscribirse y acreditarse ante el Gobierno de Trinidad y Tobago. Luego de enviada la información solicitada fue imposible para muchas organizaciones recibir una confirmación, situación

que también enfrentaron varias organizaciones al momento de llegar al país para participar del Foro. Este es un aspecto logístico, no sustantivo, pero provocó incertidumbre y malestar, lo que afectó el ánimo con que los y las participantes llegamos al foro.

Un segundo aspecto, de carácter político y sustantivo, es que las organizaciones participantes no tuvimos acceso a las últimas versiones de la Declaración, que es el documento más relevante de toda Cumbre ya que incorpora los compromisos que los gobiernos adquieren en ella. Toda declaración gubernamental es información pública de acuerdo a los estándares internacionales, incluido sus borradores y versiones preliminares. El acceso a la información es un derecho humano fundamental y además es un requisito para ejercer otros derechos, tales como el de la participación ciudadana en los asuntos de interés público. Las Cumbres precisamente consisten en abordar asuntos de interés público a través de un diálogo político multilateral.

Esta misma desinformación sobre el borrador de la Declaración fue parte del Foro de la Sociedad Civil que se llevó a cabo los primeros días de marzo en Washington DC, con anterioridad al Foro de la Sociedad Civil en Trinidad y Tobago. Su objetivo era finalizar el proceso de foros subregionales que había llevado a cabo la OEA en forma destacable. A

pesar de haber hecho llegar una carta al Gobierno de Trinidad y Tobago solicitando la entrega del borrador, éste no fue entregado, lo que constituye un acto de secretismo y no de transparencia.

Todos sabemos que es posible conseguir el borrador de la Declaración entre algunos gobiernos, algunos funcionarios de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) y en algunos sitios web. Pero si queremos avanzar en la posibilidad de ejercer un derecho y a la vez de institucionalizar la participación de las Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil OSC en el Proceso de Cumbres es de toda importancia que esta situación sea superada.

La tercera gran falencia fue la casi nula autonomía por parte de las OSC en la definición de la agenda del Foro de la Sociedad Civil de Trinidad y Tobago. De acuerdo a la opinión de organizaciones locales el diálogo con el gobierno se caracterizó por ser difícil, interrumpido y con gran dificultad para acceder a información sobre la cantidad y el perfil de los y las de participantes, aspecto fundamental para organizar el debate.

Finalmente, los temas y la agenda del Foro recogieron muy poco el proceso previo de participación realizado. Esto significó interrumpir el proceso previo y comenzar la discusión nuevamente sobre las propuestas a presentar a los cancilleres,

lo que provoca desgaste y desmotivación de los participantes con el proceso.

La cuarta gran falencia fue la forma del Gobierno de Trinidad y Tobago de organizar la participación de las OSC en el diálogo con los cancilleres, donde además participaron representantes del Foro del sector privado, de los Jóvenes y de los indígenas. Nos plantearon que sólo podían asistir 10 representantes del Foro, luego de solicitar iguales condiciones de participación que los otros Foros, finalmente permitieron la participación de 40 representantes. Al día siguiente al comenzar el diálogo con los cancilleres pudimos constatar que la mitad de la sala estaba desocupada.

Como representante de la Red Democracia Activa estuve a cargo de presentar a los cancilleres y representantes de gobierno las propuestas presentadas en el foro sobre institucionalización de la participación en el Proceso de Cumbres y la importancia de mejorar el proceso de seguimiento a la implementación de los mandatos adquiridos.

Las propuestas presentadas fueron las siguientes:

- **Desarrollar una estrategia clara y permanente en materia de participación de la sociedad civil en el sistema interamericano.** Se debe establecer un diálogo institucionalizado gobierno-sociedad civil a nivel nacional, subregional y hemisférico orientado a debatir sobre los principales desafíos que enfrenta la región, con especial énfasis en influir en los compromisos que adquieran los gobiernos en las Cumbres y en su posterior implementación.

- **Difundir en el ámbito nacional los acuerdos adoptados en las Cumbres de las Américas.** Es de

vital importancia que la ciudadanía esté informada sobre los acuerdos y compromisos adquiridos por sus Gobiernos.

- **Implementar un mecanismo efectivo que de seguimiento y promueva el de cumplimiento de los gobiernos.** En este sentido dar el apoyo político y financiero a la OEA para que cumpla este rol y promover alianzas colaborativas con organizaciones de la sociedad civil que tienen experiencia en la construcción de metodologías pertinentes, tales como la Red Democracia Activa y su Índice de Evaluación de Cumplimiento Gubernamental (IECG), entre otras.

Varios Gobiernos apoyaron estas propuestas en sus intervenciones posteriores.

Como dijo Hazel Brown, representante de la Coordinadora de ONG's de Trinidad y Tobago, "las dos palabras de esta Cumbre deben ser participación e implementación."

Esperemos que estas conceptos inspiren la toma de decisiones de los gobiernos, ya que el Proceso de Cumbres debe reforzar su relevancia y legitimidad entre los propios actores gubernamentales, además de los políticos y sociales. 🌐

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Paraguayan president admits paternity

The public image of former priest and Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo is coming under serious scrutiny in the face of paternity charges.

Many dismissed the paternity suit, filed on April 8, as another tactic in a campaign launched by Lugo's political opponents, since he was elected one year ago. However, the claim was recognized as fact on April 13, when Lugo publicly acknowledged that he had fathered a child out of wedlock.

Lugo's election victory led to the ousting of the powerful Colorado party who were considered corrupt by many Paraguayans.

The implications of Lugo's indiscretion are complicated by his former role as a Catholic priest. He was the Catholic bishop of San Pedro until 2004, ultimately retiring from the church to enter politics in 2006. The child was not conceived during his time as a bishop, yet there are claims that the affair goes back many years.

Lugo's popularity and his voluntary confirmation of his paternity may shield him from long-term disrepute.

Nonetheless, two other women have since claimed to have children fathered by Lugo. If there is any truth to these assertions, Lugo's credibility, image, and attempts to reform Paraguay may suffer.

Uncertainty and Scarce Results at Fifth Summit

Francine Jacomé

The Fifth Summit of the Americas took place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on April 17-19, 2009, and its results can be interpreted in several different ways.

For the first time in the Summits process that started in 1994, the heads of state and government did not sign the final declaration, due to a lack of consensus over it; this could signal an underlying crisis, and even lead to this being the last summit of its kind. On the other hand, there was no climate of confrontation, which can be interpreted as the first step toward a greater understanding between most of the countries in the region, especially given what most perceive to be a shift in U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean.

A few days before the end of the Summit, which is one of the few fora for the heads of state and government of the region (except Cuba) to meet, we have entered a waiting period; we will need to wait for short-term action on the part of different actors so we can see the bigger picture clearly. There is currently a fair degree of uncertainty about the direction in which inter-

American relations are likely to go in the near future.

The current climate of eased tension depends on the influence of domestic dynamics and on the solutions that are being put forward to counter the global financial crisis. In the inter-American context, one can expect two types of response: a pragmatic one, which would focus on tackling and finding solutions for

Instead of dialogue and debate about important topics on the global agenda, the Summit focused on the formal approval of a declaration that had been negotiated for two years and that had very little to do with current affairs.

the financial crisis, and a political/ideological one, which would have the Cuban issue front-and-centre in the agenda. We will have to see if the 39th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), which will

take place in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on June 2-3, 2009, sticks to its central theme, "Toward a Culture of Non-Violence" or if the meeting disperses towards non-agenda topics, which is what happened during the Trinidad Summit.

The formal agenda that had been determined for the Fifth Summit took on a secondary role. In reality, the debate was focused on issues that had not been included, most notably the global financial crisis and Cuba's return to the inter-American system. Regarding the former, conversations in the Summit led to one of the few concrete decisions that were adopted: the recapitalization of the Inter-American Development Bank as a way of tackling the crisis' regional consequences.

Regarding the latter, the emergence of the Cuban issue was not avoided by the U.S. president. In fact, he pre-empted it through announcements before the Summit and in the speech that he delivered in Trinidad. It is worth mentioning that Cuba is interested in easing tensions, so as to not block an incipient dialogue that will take time to develop but has already started. Within

the framework of the global crisis, President Obama's decisions about the lifting of restrictions on travel and remittances are crucial for the Cuban economy. It is, however, very unlikely that the Cuban issue will be resolved in the San Pedro Sula General Assembly.

The Fifth Summit was apparently not very productive in terms of advancement of the inter-American agenda, but it did ease tensions, especially those between the governments of the United States and Venezuela. Venezuela had announced that it would show up in Port-of-Spain with all of its "artillery." The day before the Summit, a meeting of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) took place in Cumaná (Venezuela), with the purpose of highlighting the regional leadership of Venezuela's president. However, when he arrived in Trinidad, Chávez showed a cordial side, and looked for an opportunity to have a picture taken with the new U.S. president. An important strategy to contain the Venezuelan president was the holding of a meeting between the U.S. president and the members of the Union of South American Nations, which strengthened this Union over ALBA as a forum for the exchange of opinions.

Even though the Summit did not feature the usual confrontations, it is important to keep in mind differences and fault lines do exist, and will continue to do so in future meetings. It is likely that ALBA countries, under Venezuela's leadership, will keep trying to make the Cuban issue the centre of all discussions; this will shift other priority issues to the background, especially those related to democratic governance.

The Trinidad meeting showed that the Summit process is overcome by rigidity. Instead of promoting dialogue and debate about important topics on the global agenda, the Summit focused on the formal approval of a declaration that had been negotiated for two years and that had very little to do with current affairs. It was unheard of that the Declaration of April 19, 2009 was not signed; instead, the signing was "delegated" to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, due to the lack of agreement over some of its content. The governments of Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Paraguay had forewarned that they would not be signing the Declaration, since it did not include the Cuban issue; the Secretary General of the OAS had nevertheless clarified previously that any decision in this respect had to be taken by the OAS General Assembly, and not by the Summit of the Americas.

Before the meeting, several actors had already been feeling uneasy about the Declaration. The drafts and final text had only been known to the government bureaucrats that participated in the negotiations process. Civil society organizations (CSOs) repeatedly asked to see the documents at several sub-regional and hemispheric fora, so they could provide input. Despite the effort on the part of the OAS to strengthen the participation of different actors (CSOs, youth, entrepreneurs, unions, and others) in the Summits process, their contributions will be necessarily limited if they lack information. In this sense, there was a clear lack of political will on the part of governments to allow full and proactive participation; the host government limited the participation of CSOs

not only in agenda-setting, but also in the organization of the Civil Society Forum that took place within the Fifth Summit Framework.

However, despite the meeting's serious organizational and logistical deficiencies, there were positive elements that may allow the Summits process to achieve some continuity. In the declaration, there is a commitment to convening Summits every three years instead of every five. According to preliminary reports, Colombia, Paraguay and Venezuela have formally requested to host the next meeting. 

Francine Jácome is the Executive Director of the Venezuelan Institute for Social and Political Studies (IN-VESP).

Paraguay-Bolivia border

Bolivian President Evo Morales and Paraguayan leader Fernando Lugo signed an agreement on April 27 resolving a longstanding border dispute over the Chaco region. Argentinean president Cristina Fernandez (Kirchner) hosted the signing.

The two countries fought a war over resource-rich Chaco from 1932 to 1935. Following the conflict, Paraguay was awarded a larger portion of the territory. The newly signed agreement is a reiteration of the borders established in the initial Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Boundaries signed in 1938. The current leaders of Bolivia and Paraguay condemned the perceived role foreign oil companies played in exacerbating the conflict. While reports of oil in the region proved to be false, the smaller territory ceded to Bolivia contains rich deposits of natural gas and minerals.

Una Cumbre de Incertidumbre y Escasos Resultados

Francine Jacomé

Se pueden hacer diversas lecturas sobre los resultados de la Quinta Cumbre de las Américas, que se realizó en Puerto España, Trinidad y Tobago entre el 17 y 19 de abril de 2009.

Por primera vez en el proceso de Cumbres de las Américas iniciado en 1994, los mandatarios no firmaron la declaración final por falta de consenso, lo cual podría indicar una seria crisis e incluso hacer pensar que ésta podría ser la última cita de este tipo. Por otro lado, la ausencia de un clima de confrontación y enfrentamiento podría evaluarse como un primer paso para un mayor entendimiento entre la mayoría de los países de la región, especialmente en función de lo que algunos perciben como un cambio en la política de Estados Unidos hacia América Latina y el Caribe.

A pocos días de finalizado el encuentro, que es uno de los pocos espacios que reúne a todos los go-

bernantes del continente, menos a Cuba, es posible concluir que se ha abierto un compás de espera y que en el corto plazo las acciones concretas de los diferentes actores involucrados permitirán una mayor claridad. En los actuales momentos, existe incertidumbre sobre el rumbo que tomarán en lo inmediato las relaciones interamericanas.

Hay un clima de aparente distensión que dependerá de la influencia que tengan las dinámicas domésticas así como las soluciones que se vayan produciendo como respuesta a la crisis económica mundial. En el contexto interamericano, pueden esperarse dos tipos de respuesta. Una pragmática, centrada en esfuerzos destinados a abordar y proponer posibles soluciones a esta crisis. Otra, más política e ideológica, que buscará ubicar el tema cubano como el principal punto de la agenda. En la Trigésimo Novena Sesión Ordinaria de la Asamblea General de la Orga-

nización de los Estados Americanos (OEA) el 2 y 3 de junio de 2009 en San Pedro Sula, Honduras, se verá si se logra mantener “Hacia una cultura de la no-violencia” como el eje central de la reunión o si se dispersa en temas no incluidos en la agenda oficial, como ocurrió durante la Cumbre de Trinidad.

La agenda formal que se había planteado para la Quinta Cumbre pasó a tener un papel secundario. En la práctica, el debate tuvo como centro temas que no habían sido contemplados, básicamente la crisis económica mundial y el regreso de Cuba al sistema interamericano. En cuanto al primero, el diálogo llevó a una de las pocas decisiones que se tomaron, la recapitalización del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo como uno de los mecanismos que permitirá afrontar las consecuencias regionales de la crisis.

En referencia al segundo, se produjo un protagonismo del tema de

Trinidad and Tobago readies itself to host Commonwealth Summit in November

In the wake of hosting the Fifth Summit of the Americas, Trinidad and Tobago is now looking forward to receiving the Commonwealth summit on November 27-29, 2009. While the agenda is still being negotiated, climate change, the global financial structure a year after the financial crisis began in earnest, and how to advance corporate social innovation will likely be on the agenda. There will be separate forums for business, youth and civil society. Business development and foreign investment sessions in advance of the Commonwealth leaders' summit will highlight the need for economic development in the Caribbean and throughout the world. The meeting takes place every two years in an informal “retreat setting” and includes the heads of government from 53 countries across six continents that were formerly part of the British Empire, including Canada.

Cuba, el cual no fue eludido por el presidente estadounidense. Más bien se adelantó con sus anuncios previos a la Cumbre y sus referencias en el discurso presentado en la Cumbre. Es de notar que la isla caribeña tiene un interés en limitar la confrontación en función de no entorpecer los inicios de un diálogo que tardará, pero que ya está en proceso. En el marco de la crisis, para la economía cubana son muy importantes las decisiones del presidente Obama sobre la eliminación de restricciones de viaje y de envío de remesas. No obstante, es poco probable que este tema sea resuelto en la Asamblea General de San Pedro Sula.

En cuanto al desarrollo de la Quinta Cumbre, pese a que aparentemente fue poco productiva en cuanto a los avances de la agenda interamericana, permitió disminuir las tensiones, especialmente entre el gobierno de Estados Unidos y el de Venezuela. Éste último había anunciado que iría a Puerto España con toda su “artillería”. El día antes se llevó a cabo en Cumaná, Venezuela una cumbre de la Alternativa Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA) para proyectar la imagen del liderazgo regional del presidente de Venezuela. Sin embargo, al llegar a Trinidad mantuvo una posición cordial buscando oportunidades para retratarse con el nuevo presidente de Estados Unidos. Una estrategia importante para contener al presidente venezolano fue realizar la reunión entre el presidente estadounidense y los miembros de la

Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, que además sirvió para fortalecer a este mecanismo como instancia de interlocución, relegando al ALBA.

Aunque no se produjeron los ya tradicionales enfrentamientos, es importante tener en cuenta que las diferencias y fracturas persisten y probablemente continuarán en futuras reuniones. Es probable que los

En vez de promover un diálogo y un debate sobre los temas actuales de la agenda mundial, se concentró en la formalidad de aprobar una declaración que se venía negociando desde hacía dos años.

países del ALBA, liderados por Venezuela, mantengan la estrategia de tratar de hacer que el tema de Cuba sea el centro de discusión, lo cual relegará otros temas que se considerarán como prioritarios, especialmente aquéllos referidos a la gobernabilidad democrática.

Esta Cumbre evidenció el reto que tiene este proceso en cuanto a su rigidez. En vez de promover un diálogo y un debate sobre los temas actuales de la agenda mundial, se concentró en la formalidad de aprobar una declaración que se venía negociando desde hacía dos años y que

demonstró no estar en sintonía con los temas del momento. Fue inédito que no se firmara la Declaración el 19 de abril de 2009, al concluir la Cumbre y que “delegara” en el Primer Ministro de Trinidad y Tobago su rúbrica, debido justamente a los desacuerdos sobre algunos de sus contenidos. Ya de antemano los gobiernos de Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay y Venezuela habían anunciado que no firmarían la declaración ya que no incluía el tema cubano, aunque el Secretario General de la OEA había aclarado de antemano que una decisión al respecto debe tomarse en la instancia de la Asamblea General y no de las Cumbres de las Américas.

El malestar en torno a la Declaración ya se había manifestado antes del evento y por parte de diferentes actores. Los borradores y texto final fueron solamente del conocimiento de los funcionarios gubernamentales que participaron en las negociaciones. Desde las organizaciones de la sociedad civil (OSC) se realizaron reiteradas solicitudes de acceso a los documentos en los foros sub-regionales y hemisférico con la finalidad de poder aportar propuestas para su texto. Pese al esfuerzo realizado por la OEA para fortalecer la participación de distintos sectores (organizaciones de la sociedad civil, jóvenes, empresarios y sindicatos, entre otros) en el proceso de Cumbres, es poco el aporte que se puede hacer si no se cuenta con la información necesaria. En este sentido,

se evidenció la falta de voluntad política de los gobiernos de permitir una participación plena y proactiva. Inclusive, el gobierno anfitrión limitó la participación de las OSC en la elaboración de la agenda y en la organización del Foro de la Sociedad Civil realizado en el marco de la V Cumbre.

No obstante, a pesar de las graves deficiencias organizativas y logísticas que marcaron el encuentro, puede también señalarse que se produjeron elementos positivos que podrían señalar que es posible que este proceso de Cumbres tenga continuidad. En la declaración se señala que su convocatoria debe hacerse por lo menos cada 3 años. Según las informaciones preliminares, Colombia, Paraguay y Venezuela han solicitado formalmente ser la sede del próximo encuentro. 🌐

Francine Jácome es la Directora Ejecutiva del Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos (INVESP).

Private Sector Looking for Summit Follow-Up

Debbie Mohammed

Thirty-four hemispheric leaders concluded their Fifth Summit of the Americas but failed to reach unanimity on the Declaration of Port of Spain, leaving host Prime Minister, Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago as the only signatory to what he described as a “compromised document”.

The summit's conclusion was anti-climactic at best, since the countries belonging to the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) had earlier signaled their intention to reject the Declaration as unacceptable on the grounds that it did not provide solutions to the global financial crisis and that it unfairly excludes Cuba. While the issue of Cuba dominated the summit, the Declaration's focus on human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability as pillars for the hemisphere's future development run the risk of being just “lofty ideals” if the innovative ideas advanced by the private sector, youth and civil society forums languish because of national bureaucracy and ideological differences.

Two major themes emanated from the private sector forum. Firstly, that the global economic crisis was beginning to negatively impact economies of the region, albeit in varying degrees of intensity; and secondly, that this crisis paves the way for significant growth and development opportunities predicated on a new private-public sector dynamic.

No longer can the private sector and government operate as distinct entities, working seemingly at cross-purposes to achieve the same objectives. Strong private-public sector partnerships were imperative for “creating long-term investment opportunities needed to attract the FDI that will promote growth,” according to Jennifer Jeffs, a Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), and for identifying and developing new sectors and exportable products. This strategy could translate into concrete solutions to the region's contracting business activities and declining employment opportunities.

Private sector representatives viewed the Summit with some optimism, anticipating that their concerns and recommendations would be addressed as a matter of urgency. Common challenges identified by private sectors across the hemisphere relate to inadequate capitalization for small and micro-enterprises; lack of capacity in high value sectors; low levels of innovation; declining productivity levels; low investments in research, and infrastructure, including Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and reduced capacity to finance social programs at a time when greater social interventions are required. The private sector also emphasized the need for greater investments in infrastructure, ICTs, research, development and innovations, and

education as critical components for the recalibration of economies in this global crisis. These targeted investments were therefore seen as investments in the region's future and integral to countries' growth plans and future competitiveness. If economic transformation for sustainable development was to be attained, private sector input needed to take part in all these processes.

Private Sector Proposals

Immediate or short-term proposals were also identified to keep firms afloat, build competitiveness and facilitate governments' social expenditure. These included:

- seeking commitments for stimulus packages from both international financial agencies and regional banks to make larger volumes of financing available to countries of the region;
- enhancing trade-related capacity through modernization and harmonization of taxation, financial management systems and regulatory frameworks;
- forging a new relationship between government and the private sector aimed at increasing productivity, growing the economy and increasing human prosperity.

Noting that most countries of the hemisphere, particularly the small CARICOM and Central American states were already experiencing significant declines in remittances, the return of unemployed migrants into their countries, and flagging tourism receipts, the Hemispheric Private Sector Forum sought to extract from leaders a commitment

to mitigate the impacts of the crisis and revitalise economic activity.

Private Sector Recommendations

Recommendations emanating from a two-day pre Summit consultation included:

- greater private sector-public sector partnerships;
- increased investment in education, training, infrastructure and ICTs;

The private sector emphasized the need for greater investments in infrastructure, ICTs, research, development and innovations, and education as critical components for the recalibration of economies in this global crisis.

- promoting university and business partnerships to foster research and development; and,
- financing for small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Hemispheric Private Sector Forum mirrors, in a very real sense, the complexities of articulating the positions of diverse countries and sectors. Of particular concern to CARICOM states were the immediate impacts of the global economic crisis on their tourism and offshore financial and gaming industries. Capitalization of micro-enterprises and a renewed commitment to the

expansion of agriculture remain priority areas for this sub-region.

Whether the real concerns and recommendations emanating from the region's private sectors are incorporated within the Final Declaration is unclear. Even if the Declaration does somehow speak to private sector concerns, the troubling issue of slow implementation arises. Expectations for united and tactical responses to revitalise economic ac-

tivity, increase trade and ameliorate social conditions may go the route of the past four summits whose declarations have been bedevilled by inertia.

It brings into question the role of the Organization of American States which appears to be increasingly sidelined as a key resource in the Summit organization and agenda setting processes, as well as the implementation of

declaration goals.

At a time when the region faces such uncertainty, leaders need to be innovative and receptive to new approaches. It would be a shame if, for ideological differences, the Fifth Summit of the Americas is remembered as nothing more than the proverbial "talk shop". 

Debbie Mohammed is a lecturer in International Trade at the Institute of International Relations, University of the West Indies.

¡Hola Canadá! Spanish Is Third Most Spoken Language

Jack Jedwab and Victor Armony

There has been an important growth of second language Spanish speakers in Canada.

While it remains well behind English and French, in 2006 Spanish has become the third most widely spoken language in Canada and has now earned the title of Canada's most important non-official language. It is worth noting that, appropriately, Chinese is not considered one language and the census lists Mandarin and Cantonese separately.

Census data show that Spanish enjoyed a growth rate of 50 per cent over a decade, rising from half-a-million to three-quarter of a million (758,000 or 2.4 per cent of the total population). In 2006, some 345,000 persons in Canada reported that their mother tongue/first language was Spanish. However, most Canadians that reported an ability to speak Spanish did so as a second language. In 2006 some 400,000 Canadians spoke Spanish as a second language compared with 277,000 a decade earlier.

Although these numbers no doubt pale by comparison with the numbers of Spanish speakers in the United States, the growth of Spanish in Canada and the transmission of the language merit greater attention from researchers and policy-makers. The growing importance of geo-political ties between Canada and the Americas may make knowledge of Spanish in Canada an increasingly valuable asset. Much

like the United States, the increasing number of Spanish-speakers in Canada is primarily attributable to continued immigration from source countries where Spanish is the principal language. Amongst those persons whose first language is Spanish, nearly three-quarters were born outside of Canada. The majority of these immigrants arrived after 1991 (56 per cent). Half of the Canadians reporting that they speak Spanish reside in the cities of Montréal and Toronto.

Where Canada's Spanish speakers live

Given the geographic concentration of French in Québec and English elsewhere in Canada, it is interesting to observe the patterns of ac-

quisition of English and French by Spanish speakers. Not surprisingly, the first official language spoken by Canadians whose mother tongue is Spanish varies significantly according to the regional language composition. Hence, nearly two in three Canadians whose mother tongue is Spanish report English as their first official language spoken.

The language divide is reflected in the extent to which the first official language spoken of the mother-tongue-Spanish population is overwhelmingly English in cities outside the province of Québec and predominantly French (frequently along with English) in urban centres within Québec. Over the past two decades, the fastest growing non-official language in the province of

Percentage of persons whose principal language is Spanish that speak both English and French (trilinguals), by immigrant status and selected city of residence, 2006

Mother tongue Spanish	Both English and French	
	Immigrants	Non-Immigrants
Canada	20.9	23.2
Montreal	49.8	45.6
Gatineau	45.5	41.8
Ottawa	28.3	39.6
Toronto	7.4	10.3
Vancouver	12.2	13.6

Source: Special Compilation, Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2006.

Québec was Spanish. Montréal is home to some 200 000 persons that speak Spanish and just under half that number report that it is their principal language. Some 20 000 Montrealers whose mother tongue is Spanish are Canadian-born and not surprisingly the vast majority—some 75 000 were foreign-born. A narrow majority of Montrealers (51 per cent) whose mother tongue is Spanish report an ability to speak three languages (Spanish, English and French), 40 per cent speak Spanish and French and another five per cent speak Spanish and English only.

Spanish use in Canadian homes

Regarding the language most frequently used at home, Spanish continues to be the first choice amongst the majority of those for whom it is the first language they learned. There is, however, noteworthy variation in the extent to which it is most often spoken at home across cities. Retention of Spanish in the home is

highest in the cities in the province of Québec.

Montréal followed by Gatineau and Toronto had the highest rate of use of Spanish most often in the home. The 2006 census data suggest that Montréal and Gatineau have the highest rates of language retention for those under the age of 20. In effect, youth whose mother tongue is Spanish and who operate in majority French language areas are more likely to speak Spanish most often at home than is the case for those who operate in majority English language areas. When looking at individuals that are part of the same age group, the retention of Spanish in the home is still highest in Montréal and the margin is even wider when considering the presence of Spanish spoken in the home along with an official language.

Spanish ‘Trilinguals’: From the School to the Workplace

What impact does schooling

have on the acquisition of English and French by youth whose mother tongue is Spanish? In the initial years of elementary school (age 5-9), the 2006 census reveals that the population with Spanish mother tongue is most likely to acquire both official languages in the city of Ottawa, followed by Gatineau, with Montréal a distant third when it comes to trilingualism. In Toronto the percentage of knowing English and French with Spanish mother tongue is a mere six per cent and in Vancouver it is approximately 12 per cent. In the age group 10-14, the reported level of knowledge of English and French amongst the group of Spanish mother tongue rises to forty per cent or greater in Montréal (40 per cent), Gatineau (46.9 per cent), Ottawa (47.5 per cent), Toronto (11 per cent) and Vancouver (17 per cent).

However an important change in the pattern emerges between the 10-14 and 15-19 cohorts as the percentage of bilinguals jumps substan-

Various Languages Spoken in Canada (000's), 1996-2006

Various Language Spoken (000's)	1996	2001	2006
Spanish	506	611	758
Italian	694	681	661
German	654	636	623
Panjabi (Punjabi)	249	339	456
Chinese ¹	791	-	-
Cantonese		399	435
Arabic	223	290	365
Portuguese	259	265	275
Polish	258	250	243
Ukrainian	218	201	174
Greek	162	159	157
Mandarin	na	208	282

Source: Special Compilation, Statistics Canada, Census of Canada, 2006

¹ In the 1996 census, all Chinese languages were combined under one category. In 2001, the category was divided and Cantonese and Mandarin were selected.

tially in Montréal (from 40 to 63.3 per cent) while decreasing in Ottawa and Gatineau, remaining stable in Toronto and rising slightly in Vancouver. When examining language learning amongst the Canadian-born whose mother tongue is Spanish, one observes a substantial increase in the percentage that know English and French between the under 15 years of age and the 15-24 group. The biggest jump is in Montréal (24.4 to 75.4 per cent), likely a testimony to the degree of contact with both English and French as youth enter the workplace.

Conclusion

At its current rate of growth the number of persons that speak Spanish in Canada will inevitably pass the one million mark with the 2011 census. Census data reveals that many Canadians are able to learn three languages as evidenced by the number of persons whose first language is Spanish and also possesses knowledge of English and French. In Montréal as well as in the National Capital Region these "trilinguals" represent a potentially important resource in bridging language divides within Canada as well as between Canada and the Americas. 🌐

Jack Jedwab is the Executive Director of the Association for Canadian Studies.

Victor Armony is the Director of UQAM's Observatory of the Americas and Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

The PRI and Mexico's July 5 Mid-Term Congress and Senate Elections

Joy Langston

The former hegemonic Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) has enjoyed great legislative power and electoral success during the first two years of Mexican President Felipe Calderón's six-year term in office. Because of the strong three-party system, no party holds a majority in either House of Congress. Without a legislative majority for his party, the National Action Party (PAN), President Calderón has been forced to turn to the PRI's legislative leaders to help pass important reform legislation in Congress.

The ability of the PRI to force the PAN and the Executive to meet its terms was strengthened by the refusal of the center-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) to negotiate some important structural reforms with what they consider to be an unfairly elected president. The self-imposed exclusion of the PRD kept them, until recently, from any serious participation in the economic agenda, which allowed the PRI's 106 federal deputies, elected in 2006 to non-renewable three year terms, and 32 senators, also elected in the same year to single six year terms, to demand a high price for their acquiescence with Calderón's pension and fiscal legislative initiatives, among others.

Even worse for the president's National Action Party has been the rising violence and deaths associ-

ated with the drug cartels and the downturn in the Mexican economy due to the U.S. housing and financial meltdown. These two unrelated issues caused the president's popularity to drop during 2008. In the 2009 legislative elections, 500 federal deputies will be elected, 300 in majority districts and 200 in closed proportional representation lists.

The PRI is well poised to take advantage of the PAN's problems in government, as it currently holds 18 of the nation's 32 state governments, including the vote-rich states of Mexico, Nuevo León, Puebla, and Veracruz. Governors are important resources for parties and candidates in the federal congressional races as they can use their positions to help campaigning. Furthermore, if a governor is popular with his state's voters, his popularity lifts the electoral fortunes of all those competing under the same party label.

The PRI entered 2009 with considerable confidence as some analysts even began to wonder if the former governing party would win a majority of 251 in the Chamber of Deputies. This assurance that the party would do well stemmed both from the president's falling popularity as well as the PRI's local electoral victories in 2008. The PRI had done well in local assembly races in Coahuila, Hidalgo, Nayarit, and Quintana Roo. It also won important cities away from the opposition in several

states, such as the case of Acapulco in the state of Guerrero.

The PAN leadership, however, is acutely aware of the dangers that a resurgent PRI represents in terms of the 2012 presidential election and it went on the offensive during the first months of 2009. The leader of the party, Germán Martínez, accused the PRI of having capitulated and negotiated with drug cartels during its last years in power. This was a difficult accusation for the PRI: on the one hand it had criticized the PAN for its handling of the drug war; on the other, it did little to stop drug cartels from setting up in Mexico beginning in the 1980s.

The leader of the PRI, Beatriz Paredes, decided to respond by challenging the PAN's charges and continuing to criticize the Administration's policies. The strategy seems to have backfired as shown by the PRI's falling poll numbers. The Berumen public opinion polling firm shows that since February of this year, those who plan to vote for PRI candidates in the July 5, 2009 Chamber elections have fallen from 39.9 to 30.3 percent, while those who express a preference for the PAN have grown from 24.9 to 27.4 per cent (www.berumen.com/index_Director3.htm).

Swine flu impact?

It is impossible to predict as of now the possible effects of the influenza pandemic on the elections. The federal government's response

to the crisis has been quite active as it has closed schools, offices, and theatres, while using the Army and other public personnel to distribute protective facemasks. The president has appeared on television, and other agencies have been explaining,

It is impossible to predict as of now the possible effects of the influenza pandemic on the elections.

promoting, and badgering the public to take precautions against the public health threat.

All this could help the PAN as Mexicans might see the president and his party as competent to govern, despite the fall in the peso and the massive financial losses caused by a downturn in tourism and in economic activity in general as millions of people stay home to avoid infection. On the other hand, if the crisis continues on indefinitely or spirals out of control, voters may simply take out their anger and anguish on the party in power. In this scenario, the PRI will likely come out with the largest legislative cau-

cus in the Chamber, much as it did in the 2003 mid-term elections, but without winning a majority.

PRI presidential contenders

As of now, the PRI has two serious contenders for the party's 2012 presidential nomination: governor of the State of Mexico Enrique Peña Nieto, and leader of the party's senate caucus, Manlio Fabio Beltrones.

If Governor Peña Nieto is able to do well in his state's federal and local elections, he will be even better situated for a run at the presidency, given his charisma and resources. However, Beltrones has been a spirited leader for the PRI and has won many legislative victories against the Executive. It is still too soon to make any predictions, but it is very probable that the struggle between these two figures will increase after the elections in July. 

Joy Langston is a Professor of Political Science in the Division of Political Studies at the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City.

Canadian Innovation Boosts Lawyer Competency

Hugh A. Robertson, Q.C.

Canadian law practitioners are benefiting from exciting new approaches that focus both on the training of new lawyers and supporting the ongoing needs of practitioners to keep up-to-date in a fast-changing legal profession.

One of the great challenges of legal education anywhere is how to adequately create and maintain the competency of lawyers to practice law. Law schools face the daunting challenge of unreasonable expectations. The inculcation of theory and selective elements of legal knowledge leaves little time for the acquisition of the skills necessary for practice.

Many programs attempt to bridge that gap; however, those efforts often conflict with the recruitment demands of the profession and the burning desire of recent graduates to work and pay off student loans. Once working, the rush of professional life can make it difficult for lawyers to remain fully informed and retain their competency. Can these diverse needs be reconciled and accommodated?

Canadian legal educators and practitioners have developed two new approaches to do so using new online technology that should be considered as models for legal

educators throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Competency Framework

The first new approach began in 2004, with the introduction of the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education Program (CPLED) to the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This program

The failure to provide a system of any kind is unacceptable in a world where governments and individuals have high expectations of the competence of professionals such as lawyers.

combined conventional bar admission training program methodologies with Internet-based technology and distance education. It began with the identification of the skills, knowledge and attitudes essential to competently enter the practice of law, which led to the creation of a three-page Competency Profile that categorizes and identifies what entry-level lawyers should be able to do as they commence practice.

The Competency Framework was

then developed to detail the kinds of training activities that would permit each student to acquire those competencies and enable the program assessors to determine if each candidate had successfully demonstrated them. Operating over a number of months, the training and testing occurs while each candidate is engaged in the workplace during a year-long articling or apprenticeship period. Tasks are assigned and performed with immediate feedback provided by Learning Group Facilitators, who are experienced practitioners working under the close supervision of professional staff. Much of the work is done by the students in the workplace and submitted online using the Blackboard software program.

Those skills that only can be demonstrated and performed face-to-face such as advocacy, interviewing, counseling and negotiating, occur in three week-long blocks interspersed throughout the program.

The length of the program varies depending on the intensity of activities and number of students. The average amongst the three provinces is six months, including holiday breaks and it is done in conjunction with regular articling

work duties. The cumulative efforts when assessed and found to be adequate are assigned a “competency demonstrated” passing grade in the program, followed by admission to the bar.

Admission to the bar is only the beginning of the next big challenge: maintaining and enhancing lifelong professional competency. In today’s world, keeping up with rapidly changing law and practice is, at times, almost impossible. Although it is the professional responsibility of each lawyer to do so, keeping fully informed often loses out to the pressures of daily demands. Do we then subordinate our professional duties to the demands of the moment or is there a way to effectively and efficiently meet those needs?

Continuing Professional Development

The second new approach provides a constructive and sustainable way forward. A comprehensive examination of Continuing Professional Development programs in various professions and geographies highlighted both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths, where found, were in the quality of the content, ready and timely access and a supportive and accepting culture

in the profession. The weaknesses were in the mandatory and regulatory elements of delivery resulting in programs of compliance rather than learning. Recording of hours, monitoring of attendance and the wily efforts of some practitioners to evade such requirements were the hallmark of many such mandatory programs.

In 2008, the Law Society of Alberta introduced its Continuing Professional Development Program to the legal profession. In simple terms, the mandatory part is the creation of an annual, self-directed learning plan. The Legal Education Society of Alberta developed a software program to assist the user in the creation of such a plan, whereby the practitioner can identify relevant needs and resources responsive to those needs. The supporting resource bank extends from local to national products, which may be accessed in person where practical, in hard copy or online, depending on individual preferences and availability.

For most practitioners, participation in continuing legal education programs was not new; the creation of a formal plan was. Instead of simply responding to Continuing Professional Development opportunities as they arose or randomly came

to one’s attention, this program introduced the element of intentionality, whereby the individual, required by professional rules to do so and using the tools offered, develops a customized plan and then accesses the relevant resources responsive to individual needs.

These concepts and tools can be applied anywhere and to any discipline. The content of each program will vary by subject, language and locale, but the principles of self-identified and directed learning are universal in their application. The key is the customization of individual needs and access to relevant resources. While these resources are primarily generated in major urban centres, technology can make them accessible everywhere.

No system is perfect. Yet the failure to provide a system of any kind is unacceptable in a world where governments and individuals have high expectations of the competence of professionals such as lawyers. With the right tools and the development of a culture within the profession which embraces lifelong learning as an act and not just an aspiration, higher personal and collective goals can be achieved. Not only is the skill and competence of the lawyer enhanced, so also is the satisfaction derived in the meeting of client needs. Without the constant fear of being behind or missing information, the practice of law can be a pleasure again. 🌐

Hugh A. Robertson, Q.C., is the retired Executive Director of the Legal Education Society of Alberta, a past chair of the International Development Committee of the Canadian Bar Association and a current member of the Governing Council of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

Correa re-elected in Ecuador

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa was re-elected April 26 to a second term with 52 per cent of the vote. Correa, an American-educated economist, was first elected on January 2007. His opponent, former president Lucio Gutiérrez, trailed far behind with 28 per cent of the vote. Correa’s left-wing style of governance has achieved both economic success and political controversy. His refusal to repay foreign debt and his decision to close United States military bases in Ecuador earned him domestic approval alongside criticism from the West. Still, the continuity of Correa returning to office marks a positive change for a country plagued by political instability.

Book Launch of *The Cuba Wars: Fidel Castro, the United States and the Next Revolution* **12th Floor Boardroom, 1 Nicholas Street, 3:30 pm** **Ottawa, Canada**

Cuba expert Daniel Erikson draws on extensive visits to Cuba and conversations with both government officials and opposition leaders—plus key actors in Washington and Florida—to offer an unmatched portrait of a small country that is of large importance to the United States. Meet and hear the author, a senior associate for U.S. policy and director of Caribbean programs at the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, D.C., speak about his research and ideas.

Please RSVP to Peter Moore pmoore@focal.ca 613-562-0005 ext. 255 no later than May 6, 2009.

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Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters to the editor. Please send by email to pmoore@focal.ca or by fax to 613-562-2525.

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