Message from the Executive Director

This newsletter highlights the major activities of FOCAL between May and October 2000. As you will see, this was an extremely busy period for us. With the approach of the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001, we continue to devote considerable energy to improving Canadian awareness and knowledge of the hemisphere. Equally important, we are playing a constructive and significant role in enhancing policy formulation for issues that concern both Canada and its hemispheric partners. The Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly, held last June in Windsor, and the upcoming Summit are not just events. They are moments when the hemispheric agendas of all participants converge. It is our belief that Canada cannot be a full partner with other nations of the Americas without a solid base of policy understanding and information. Building this base has been and will continue to be the focus of our Policy Papers and our Summit 2001 Newsletter.

Many issues will remain important after April 2001, and FOCAL will continue to promote Canada’s interests and relations with the Americas long after the Summit is over. To do so we will continue to focus on public speaking, conference participation, partnership development, and the broad dissemination of our Policy Papers.

As this first year of the Millennium comes to a close, I thank our ever-growing network of academics and policy experts, partners and funders for their on-going support of our activities. Also, I thank all those who served FOCAL as members of our Board of Directors, and our small staff complement in Ottawa. Finally, I wish each of our readers the very best for 2001.

Nobina Robinson
FOCAL and the OAS General Assembly

FOCAL was pleased to attend a newsmaker breakfast at the National Press Club in Ottawa featuring César Gaviria, Secretary General of the OAS, just before the OAS General Assembly. The gathering gave Canadian journalists and non-governmental representatives the opportunity to ask the Secretary General about OAS priorities at Windsor and about hemispheric policy issues.

FOCAL attended the 30th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Windsor June 4-6, 2000 as an accredited civil society organization. Through its special guest status, FOCAL gained access to sessions of both the OAS General Committee and the General Assembly. The Canadian government used the General Assembly as an opportunity to highlight its human security agenda for the Americas, a concept that was generally well received by a majority of the countries in the region. Important resolutions passed in Windsor include: a Canadian proposal to send an exploratory mission to Peru to assess the state of democracy in that country; the establishment of a Fund for Peace to support border dispute settlements; and the creation of a Democracy Fund to assist countries experiencing threats to their internal democratic processes. Other events of note in Windsor were the election of Ambassador Luigi Einaudi as Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, and Canada’s long-awaited ratification of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption.

With national and international spotlights intensely focused on the General Assembly in Windsor, Nobina Robinson, Executive Director, John Graham, FOCAL Vice Chair, and Martin Roy, Policy Analyst, were contacted for frequent on-site media interviews. They provided background information on Inter-American relations, as well as commentary on issues being discussed at the OAS meeting. Other FOCAL members present in Windsor were Stacey Wilson-Forsberg, James Buchanan, and José Zaragoza.

The events served as excellent opportunities for staff members to gain direct exposure to the dynamics of regional multilateralism, and to meet with key hemispheric partners from governments and civil society. In addition, the presence of many FOCAL partners, including Corporación Participa of Chile, the Esquel Group Foundation, Human Rights Watch Americas, the Inter-American Dialogue, all based in Washington, D.C., and CRIES from Venezuela enhanced our ability to assess and evaluate developments at the meeting.

FOCAL also attended a Symposium on Hemispheric Integration and Democracy in the Americas on June 3-5, 2000, organized by Rights and Democracy. This event brought together a wide range of civil society representatives from the Americas to discuss measures to deepen democracy in the region and to participate in various sub-regional consultations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the Summit. Nobina Robinson made a brief presentation at the symposium on FOCAL’s work relating to the Summit of the Americas process.
FOCAL’S Input to Summit Deliberation

The end of the General Assembly did not mean the end of FOCAL’s work on OAS and Summit issues through the summer and fall. FOCAL provided its views on Summit preparation at meetings of the OAS Special Committee for Inter-American Summits Management in Washington D.C. Through its ongoing partnership with the Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC) at Florida International University, FOCAL published two new issues of the Summit 2001 Newsletter (available at the FOCAL website www.focal.ca). FOCAL also submitted written comments through all the institutional processes that seek civil society input, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society and the OAS.

A new partnership was established with the Leadership Council for Inter-American Summitry, which will be holding a conference co-sponsored by FOCAL in mid-January 2001. As part of an informal partnership with Corporación Participa of Chile and the Esquel Group Foundation, FOCAL will participate in a conference in January which will conclude Participa’s process of national consultations with civil society on the Summit agenda.

FOCAL’s Forum of Hemispheric Experts

FOCAL’s advisory group of leading thinkers on hemispheric issues, known as the Forum of Hemispheric Experts, met for the first time on July 28, 2000, in Ottawa for a brainstorming session. The purpose of the meeting was to address key regional issues within the context of FOCAL’s policy work, and to identify programming ideas that respond to emerging hemispheric trends looking beyond the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. The distinguished group of participants came from Canada, the United States and several Latin American countries, and included academics, representatives of multilateral institutions, private sector leaders, policy analysts, and government officials. FOCAL’s participants included members of the staff. The meeting was co-chaired by Monica Gruder Drake, Director, FOCAL and Ed Dosman, a past Executive Director and co-founder of FOCAL.

Key topics discussed during the event included judicial reform, the strengthening of political parties, peacebuilding processes, the promotion of democracy at the multilateral level, education reform, local governance and decentralization, crime prevention, tax administration, public sector reform, poverty and social exclusion, and the representation of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. The highly constructive discussions allowed us to meet with key leaders and partners in Canada and from the region, and confirmed that FOCAL’s current policy programming has targeted the priority issues for policy formulation in the Americas. The meeting also enabled FOCAL’s Board and staff to establish a long-term work plan and institutional vision for the region.
Mexico at the Millennium

In May, Stacey Wilson-Forsberg participated in a two-day conference entitled Mexico at the Millennium, held at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington DC. The event analyzed recent trends and future challenges for Mexico in the areas of economic reform, social issues, Mexico-US relations, and political reform. The common thread of the presentations was the objectives for Mexico in the new millennium. These include: strengthening the Mexican judicial system and improving law enforcement; combating trans-national (organized) crime and drug trafficking; strengthening property rights; reforming the tax system; paying special attention to Mexico-US border issues (particularly migration and drugs); and enhancing coordination between agencies dealing with the border. Other topics included improving the quality of education and supplying high tech training to the Mexican labour force; restructuring the agricultural sector; and developing mechanisms to distribute the benefits of NAFTA and economic reforms to the Mexican people.

Visit of Mexico’s President-Elect

A welcome sign of the new Mexican government’s commitment to civil society dialogue was demonstrated by a meeting of Canadian NGOs with President-Elect Vicente Fox in Toronto on August 23. Mr. Fox was also accompanied by representatives of three Mexican non-government organisations. Twenty Canadian NGO’s asked questions and expressed concerns about a number of social, economic, and political issues in Mexico. Nobina Robinson and Stacey Wilson-Forsberg represented FOCAL at the event and expressed FOCAL’s support for deepening the Canadian bilateral agenda with Mexico.

FOCAL Roundtable: Adjusting Canadian Foreign Policy to Mexico’s New Realities

On August 24 a roundtable called Adjusting Canadian Foreign Policy to Mexico’s New Realities, was held at FOCAL. Chaired by Nobina Robinson, the workshop brought together a small group of Mexican and Canadian experts to discuss ways to improve our policy discussion in Canada on the mid to long-term trends in Mexico which will influence the political and economic priorities of both Mexico and Canada in the hemisphere. Participants included academic experts from el Colegio de Mexico, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE Mexico), University of Toronto, University of Calgary, and University of Victoria, along with government officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and FOCAL policy analysts. A FOCAL Policy Paper based on the roundtable is forthcoming.

Launch of FOCAL’s Research Forum on Cuba

In May 2000, FOCAL formally launched its new program area dedicated to improving the quality of discussion in Canada about political and economic developments in Cuba and Canadian policy towards the island. Managed by Cristina Warren, this program allows FOCAL to deepen its own knowledge of key issues surrounding the Cuba question, and to build a network of experts in Canada and abroad who can enhance our knowledge of the challenges facing countries that pursue policies of constructive engagement with Cuba.

The Forum’s first activity was a round-table meeting in Ottawa on May 17, 2000 to discuss Canadian cooperation experiences with Cuba. Since then, FOCAL has created a new series called “Background Briefings on Cuba”. The first paper of this series, entitled U.S.-Cuba Relations: Trends and Underlying Forces, was published in October.

In addition, an ad hoc public speaker series on Cuba has been created to capture the latest thinking of experts on Cuba who happen to travel to Ottawa. FOCAL was pleased to welcome Carlos Alberto Montaner, who is a well-known journalist, Vice-President of Liberal International, and the founder and Chairman of the Unión Liberal Cubana as the Research Forum’s first speaker at a meeting on October 30.

The most accessible part of this program is its web site, www.cubasource.org, an annotated directory of the most informative and useful information on Cuba available free on the web. In addition to making available the Background Briefings produced by the Research Forum on Cuba, the site includes annotated links to other key research resources, a calendar of international Cuba-related conferences and events, as well as links to news sources and relevant U.S., Canadian, Cuban and international organisations.

FOCAL is grateful to the Ford Foundation and International Development Research Centre for supporting this program.
Meeting with Leaders of the American Assembly’s Western Hemisphere Project

Florencea Jubany represented FOCAL at a meeting of the American Assembly’s Western Hemisphere Project in San José, Costa Rica May 25-29. The purpose of the project was to develop a common regional vision and policy agenda for the Americas for the twenty-first century. Discussions focused on economic growth, economic integration, democratization, income distribution, poverty and the links between each. The key message of the final report was that “...poverty and inequality are the Achilles heel of the economic reform process. ...governments, international institutions and civil society must make addressing the problem of inequality and poverty the national priority”. Several regional assemblies of this initiative are planned through 2002 with the objective of broadening the consensus and developing policy innovation.

Inter-American Dialogue’s Sol Linowitz Forum

On June 15 to 18, Meriel Bradford, FOCAL’s Chair, and Nobina Robinson attended the Sol Linowitz Forum – the Biennial Plenary meeting of the Inter-American Dialogue. The Canadian Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, gave the opening speech, in which he offered his perspectives on the OAS mission to Peru and Canada’s successes at the OAS General Assembly in Windsor a few days earlier. Following briefings on Washington’s policies toward the hemisphere from representatives of both presidential candidates, Dialogue members and guests spent two days in deliberations about the key issues in the Americas. The group issued a statement endorsing the OAS’ efforts to restore democratic legitimacy in Peru. As with other major conferences, poverty, inequality, and the health of democracy in the hemisphere were key topics of discussion. However, the focus of attention was the politics of the region. Participants at this meeting were most concerned about the performance of political institutions and the quality of governance in the region. FOCAL was able to widen its network of policy experts at this meeting, and contributed a Canadian perspective to the informal discussions and working groups at the Forum.

World Bank Conference on Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Florencea Jubany attended the Sixth Annual World Bank Conference on Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (ABCD-LAC6), held in Washington June 20 and 21. Fostering Economic Security in Latin America and the Caribbean was the theme of this year’s conference, and also the focus of the Bank’s major regional report. Panels focused on identifying causes of economic insecurity and drawing lessons from the region’s experience with policies and institutions that can help reduce economic volatility and protect workers and their families against unemployment and income fluctuations. Individual savings accounts, severance pay, public works, and unemployment insurance were some of the self-insurance and risk-pooling measures reviewed.

York University’s Summer Institute

Nobina Robinson was invited to present a lecture at York University’s Summer Institute 2000 on July 19, 2000. Organized by the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, the two-week conference was entitled Building a New Agenda: Hemispheric Integration and Social Cohesion. Leading scholars from Latin American universities and doctoral students from Canada discussed Canada’s evolving role in integration in the Americas. Nobina Robinson’s talk was on “Prospects for Multilateralism: Governments, Summits and Inter-Governmental Organizations”. Nobina shared her perspectives gained from observing the OAS General Assembly, and raised some questions and concerns about the new challenges to hemispheric integration, i.e. dwindling support for democracy and free trade in some sectors of the societies of the Americas. Subsequent to the event, FOCAL has received numerous requests for collaboration and offers to write Policy Papers from scholars who participated in this conference. A book collecting all the presentations and papers submitted for this conference is forthcoming. FOCAL’s Policy Papers were used as basic reference documents for the discussion at York.

Argentina’s President Fernando de la Rúa’s visit to Canada

Speaking at a luncheon in his honour on September 8, President de la Rúa called for deeper bilateral relations – especially on trade and investment – between Argentina and Canada. “Our central idea is the modernization of our country”; he said, asking Canada to help Argentina flourish in a global environment. Canada is already Argentina’s fifth-largest investor. Nobina Robinson, had the opportunity to meet with President de la Rúa at a private reception prior to the lunch. During the official visit, President de la Rúa signed a memorandum of understanding on environmental co-operation and an agreement to study slightly enriched uranium in the Canadian-made Candu reactor in Embalse, Argentina. FOCAL was a co-sponsor of the luncheon, which was organized by the Canadian Council for the Americas. FOCAL’s guests included representatives from the Canadian Commercial Corporation, Export Development Corporation, and Alcan Aluminium.
Miami Herald’s Americas Conference
Julia Sagebien, FOCAL’s Senior Fellow attended the Miami Herald’s Americas Conference held in Miami, Florida on September 14-15. This Conference was a natural starting place for FOCAL’s private sector development strategy, since it provided a summary of Latin America’s political, economic and business environments and addressed areas of great concern to the Canadian private sector. Coming soon after the Brasilia Summit of South American countries, FOCAL was able to participate in discussions about key political and economic priorities for countries such as Brazil and Colombia, while also hearing about the obstacles and opportunities for investment in Latin America.

International Institute for Public Ethics Conference
Florence Jubany represented FOCAL at the International Institute for Public Ethics Conference on Ethics in the New Millennium – Bridging the Public and Private Sectors in Ottawa from September 24 to 28, 2000. The conference sought to explore the thinning line between the private and public sectors, whether ethics and values differ depending on which side one stands, and whether there is common ground between the perspectives of governments and that of corporations. Ms. Jubany met with Jorge Santisteban, Defensor del Pueblo (Ombudsman of Peru) during the conference, and expressed FOCAL’s support for his important contributions to democratic strengthening in Peru.

Transparency International Annual Conference
Transparency International (TI), the international anti-corruption coalition, also held its annual conference in Ottawa in late September. Representatives from TI chapters around the world, including several Latin American chapters, considered innovative ways to strengthen and to widen the anti-corruption coalition under the general heading of The Anti-Corruption Agenda in a New Decade: Defining Issues, Identifying Allies. Nobina Robinson made a presentation on building partnerships with civil society organizations as an effective strategy to contain corruption and increase transparency in Latin America. Florence Jubany attended workshops on issues of special interest to FOCAL, such as preventing corruption in political parties and election campaign financing in Argentina, fighting corruption at the local level in Guatemala, and shaping the tools of civil society to fight corruption in Latin America.

North-South Institute Conference on Dollarization
Gerd Schönwälder, FOCAL’s Deputy Director, attended a conference called ‘To Dollarize or not to Dollarize?’

The Carter Center Conference on Challenges to Democracy in the Americas
Nobina Robinson was invited to participate at the Carter Center Conference on Challenges to Democracy in the Americas, which was held in Atlanta from October 16-18, 2000. Convened by the Carter Center and its Council of Former Presidents and Prime Ministers of the Americas, the meeting provided an opportunity for government leaders, prominent scholars, policy experts, private sector representatives, civil society leaders, and media professionals to discuss the future of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nobina facilitated discussions on the theme of Making Democracy Meaningful and Empowering Citizen Participation, building on past FOCAL work in this area. The predominant interest of participants was in influencing the agenda of the Summit of the Americas. Accordingly, Nobina was able to share some of FOCAL’s current perspectives on the Summit planning and to promote FOCAL’s position that a democracy clause should be included in the Canadian Summit.

Nobina Robinson and James Buchanan attended a conference on The Evolution of Legal Systems, Bijuralism and International Trade 2000, organized by the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa on October 20-21, 2000. Participants at the conference included legal experts and specialists in international trading systems, and discussions focused on the challenge of harmonizing legislation in response to the growing number of international treaties and trading agreements. The co-existence of legal systems including civil, common, customary and religious law was assessed, as well as the impact that harmonization will have on cultural diversity. In the Americas, a particular challenge has been the adaptation of national laws to meet international obligations, and participants felt that training in this area should be a priority for the region. Many also felt that Canada’s experience with a bijural legal system could serve as a useful model for the convergence of legal traditions at the international level.
In the fall of 2000 FOCAL welcomed eleven young Canadians to its Junior Professional Trainee program at Inter-American institutions in Washington, D.C. and Montevideo, Uruguay. Working at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) are Hilary Anderson, Angelo Asimakopoulos and Scott Wolfe. Michael Bassett, Christina Lobato and Francesca Molinaro, are at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). FOCAL Junior Professional Trainees at the Organization of American States (OAS) are Nadia Bourély, Diana Chebenova, and Flavie Major. Axana Abreu Panfilova is working at the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Claudia Paguaga Trewin is in Uruguay at the Inter-American Children’s Institute.

This program is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade through the Youth Employment Strategy (YES) Program.

### Have You Read?

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) regularly produces Policy Papers and information backgrounders dealing with issues in the hemisphere. All FOCAL publications are available on our web site: www.focal.ca.

**Recent publications:**

- **The Smaller Economies of the Americas: Making the Case for Hemispheric Integration**  
  FPP-00-9  

- **La class politique: Parties and Political Instability in Haiti**  
  Author Taylor Wentges  
  FPP-00-10  

- **Summit 2001 Newsletter No. 3 – September 2000**

- **Summit 2001 Newsletter No. 4 – November 2000**

- **U.S.-Cuba Relations: Trends and Underlying Forces**  
  Author Lisandro Pérez  
  RFC-00-1  

**FOCAL also distributed the following papers through its e-mail network:**

- **Threats to Democracy in the Americas: Rapporteur’s Report**  
  Flavie Major, Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia

- **Clipping Fujimori’s Wings**  
  Maxwell A. Cameron, University of British Columbia

- **The Mexican Elections: Will They Help to Revitalize Democracy in Latin America?**  
  John W. Graham, Vice Chair of FOCAL.

- **FOCAL Submission to the FTAA Committee of Government Representatives on Civil Society Participation**

- **FOCAL’s Comments to the OAS Special Committee**  
  Nobina Robinson, Executive Director of FOCAL.

**Coming Soon**

Look for FOCAL Policy Papers on Guatemala, the Monetary Future in the Americas, Environmental Security, Chile, Brazil and Mexico in the coming months.
Board of Directors’ Meeting June 2000

In June 2000 the FOCAL Board of Directors held its bi-annual meeting in Ottawa. Directors were pleased to welcome Ronald Bourque, Carmelita Boivin-Cole, C. Anthony Lacaud Cooper, Jocelyn Coulon, Elizabeth Spehar and Brian Stevenson to the Board. Elected as officers of the Board were Meriel V. M. Bradford, Chair; John Graham, Vice-Chair; Carmelita Boivin-Cole, Secretary; and Ronald Bourque, Treasurer. (Due to a new assignment abroad, Mr. Bourque subsequently resigned from the Board in the early fall.)

In addition to various administrative issues, the Board reviewed FOCAL’s activities between December 1999 and June 2000. All Directors were pleased to note the depth and breadth of FOCAL’s work during the period. They congratulated Nobina Robinson, Executive Director and the FOCAL staff for excellent work in building FOCAL’s strengths as a policy centre over the course of the last year. Looking ahead, the Board also established a working group to investigate long term development for the organization. The meeting 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 in December 2000.

Publications by FOCAL Members

Canada, Latin America and the New Internationalism, A Foreign Policy Analysis, 1968 – 1990 by Brian Stevenson, member of the FOCAL Board of Directors, was published in July 2000 by McGill-Queen’s University Press.


The Winter 1999 edition of Canadian Foreign Policy (Vol.7, No.2, Winter 1999) included an article entitled “Le Canada et la ZLEA: réflexion sur les stratégies”. The article, written by Martin Roy in collaboration with Joel Monfils and Gordon Mace from Université Laval with Jean-Philippe Thérien from Université de Montréal, explores dilemmas and options for the implementation of a sound Canadian trade policy in the Americas.
FOCAL Board of Directors 2000 – 2001

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FOCAL Staff

Comings and Goings
FOCAL welcomed Dr. Gerd Schönwälder as Deputy Director in September 2000. Gerd joined FOCAL following two years on the Mexico Desk and the regional desk for Central America with the European Commission. He holds a Doctorate in Political Science from McGill University, and supports the Executive Director by guiding the work of the policy staff at FOCAL. José Zaragoza was promoted to Policy Analyst. Pierre Bouchard and Martin Roy have moved on to new jobs. We wish them all the best in their new careers.

FOCAL’s staff as of November 2000:

ROBINSON, Nobina, Executive Director
Ext. 234 E-mail: robinson@focal.ca

BUCHANAN, James, Policy Analyst
Ext. 223 E-mail: jbuchanan@focal.ca

CADENA, Marcelo, Webmaster
Ext. 229 E-mail: mcadena@focal.ca

CHOCHINOV, Laurie, Manager, Finance and Administration
Ext. 225 E-mail: lauriec@focal.ca

HERNANDEZ, Jose, Assistant, Policy Section
Ext. 232 E-mail: jhernandez@focal.ca

LARABIE, Diane, Receptionist
Ext. 221 E-mail: focal@focal.ca

JEAN, Paula, Accounting Assistant
Ext. 231 E-mail: pjean@focal.ca

JUBANY, Florencia, Senior Policy Analyst
Ext. 227 E-mail: jubanyf@focal.ca

SAGEBIEN, Julia, Senior Fellow
E-mail: julia.sagebien@dal.ca

SCHÖNWÄLDER, Gerd, Deputy Director
Ext. 240 E-mail: gschonwalder@focal.ca

WARREN, Cristina, Program Manager,
Research Forum on Cuba
Ext. 226 E-mail: cwarren@focal.ca

WILSON-FORSBERG, Stacey, Policy Analyst
Ext. 230 E-mail: forsberg@focal.ca

ZARAGOZA, Jose, Policy Analyst
Ext. 222 E-mail: jzaragoza@focal.ca
How to Contact Us

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.

To receive information about upcoming events and publications by e-mail or regular mail, send your full name and address to database@focal.ca.

About FOCAL

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

FOCAL receives funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, and other public and private sector organizations. Project funding is also received from the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, International Development Research Centre, Ford Foundation and the Organization of American States. For the latest information about FOCAL’s activities, please visit our web site: www.focal.ca