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To: eclac@tmn.com
Date: Friday, March 12, 1999 2:58 PM
Subject: Civil society in Colombia

Santa Fe de Bogota, March 12, 1999

Gentlemen:
Committee of governmental representatives
on participation of civil society in the ALCA process

Dear Sirs:

I am writing to you for the purpose of informing you of what has been the experience of the Universidad Javeriana in the participation of civil society in integration processes in Colombia.

I shall briefly summarize our experiences in the past and finally shall present to you the proposal that we just submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. I think that it is a proposal that could be studied at the ALCA level.

Our experience begins in 1995 with the preparation of a series of workshops in which academics, businessmen and specialists in certain matters participated. The role of civil society in integration processes was debated at that time.

These workshops were discussed in 1996 in a book titled "Sociedad Civil e integración en las Americas" [Civil Society and Integration in the Americas], published by our Faculty, with the support of the Fundación Friedrich Ebert de Colombia [Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Colombia] (FESCOL).

In 1997, together with the Asociación Nacional de Industriales (ANDI) [National Association of Manufacturers] and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, we prepared a normative and sectoral study to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Colombia with respect to the closer relationship of the Andean Community with MECOSUR. I attach a summary of said exercise, prepared in terms of months of negotiation in which the Government, businessmen and academics participated (attachment 1).

In 1998, we prepared at the behest of the Ministry of Foreign Trade a draft decree for the establishment of a Consejo Nacional de Integración (CNI)[National Integration Council],

an entity representative of the civil society and, in turn, an advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. I attach a summary of the preparation process (attachment 2).

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From the latter experience, in 1999, concern was expressed in certain sectors of civil society about preparing a project for the purpose of creating a procedure that would enable it to have a certain dialogue with the government in order to contribute ideas from a different point of view regarding integration.

The latter idea combines the results of our experience with the issue of participation of civil society in issues of integration. I think that it would be good to examine it for the purpose of adapting it to the ALCA process (attachment 3).

Sincerely,

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