

CARICOM, Chile, Mexico, Canada FTAA Meeting Call Unanswered

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FTAA PROCESS REMAINS DORMANT

CARICOM's recent call for the convening of a meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) prior to the Fourth Summit of the Americas set for Argentina next month has met with stony silence, as the Region awaits an acknowledgement of its September 1 letter to the Brazilian and US Co-Chairs of the TNC (see RNM website, www.crn.org).

CARICOM, along with Mexico, Canada and Chile (see www.crn.org), wrote to the US and Brazilian Co-Chairs, calling on them to convene a meeting of the TNC in mid-October, in order to draft consensus language on the FTAA to be included in the Mar del Plata Summit Declaration.

The lack of response from the Co-Chairs has raised concern among several countries about the break down of communication between the Co-Chairs and the rest of the TNC, as well as the prospects for the restart of negotiations. This is the third occasion on which CARICOM has written to the Co-Chairs expressing concern about the impasse in negotiations, without an official response.

In the absence of a TNC meeting, efforts are now concentrated on the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which is meeting in Washington DC October 3 to 7, to continue the negotiation of the draft Mar del Plata Declaration, which leaders of the hemisphere will issue at the close of the Fourth Summit of the Americas. The current version of the draft Declaration is silent on the FTAA.

The CARICOM letter to the Co-Chairs noted that the FTAA is an integral part of the Summit process, and that a clear signal needed to come from the highest political level in the hemisphere, of the continuing commitment to the goals and objectives of the FTAA.

CARICOM is represented at the SIRG meeting, in order to table language on the FTAA for insertion in the Declaration.