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SPEECH BY THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR ON BEHALF OF THE BUSINESS  
LEADERS OF THE ANDEAN, CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AMERICAN, SOUTHERN CONE AND NORTH  
AMERICAN REGIONS WHO MET ON DECEMBER 9, 2008  
IN SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

**(Presentation by Enrique Arturo de Obarrio to the SIRG, December 11, 2008)**

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Thank you very much, Ambassador Rodríguez. Here with me today are Mrs. Carol Ayong, CEO of the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC) and Dr. Juan José Frascchini, the representative of the business group of the Mercosur Economic and Social Consultative Forum and of the Business Technical Advisory Committee on Labor Matters (CEATAL).

On behalf of all the representatives of the private sectors of the hemisphere, we would like to thank the National Summit Secretariat, the OAS and you for the opportunity to share with you a message from the business sector on the preparatory process for the Trinidad and Tobago Summit.

Two days ago, leaders of business groups from the Caribbean, Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic, the Southern Cone, North America and the Andean Region met in San Salvador. We conducted a series of consultations with a view to channeling our contributions to the draft Declaration of the Fifth Summit, with support from the OAS General Secretariat and in coordination with the Trinidad and Tobago National Secretariat.

We are pleased to have this opportunity to formally deliver the initial contribution of the business sector. This is the result of consultations through coordinators representing the institutional structures of the private sector, in the framework of the integration processes and regional business associations. The document contains contributions from the following organizations:

CAIC, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of Central America (FECAMCO), Council of the Americas, CEATAL and the Latin American Business Council (CEAL). Contributions from the Mercosur business sector and from the Andean region are currently being prepared.

Today, the world is going through an unprecedented economic and financial crisis, the magnitude and duration of which is cloaked in great uncertainty. This results in the loss of thousands of jobs and potential recessions in our countries and the dire consequences that this can have to the detriment of our peoples. It calls for transparent and committed management of all sectors and clear and stable legal systems to foster a favorable climate for business and local and foreign investments at both the local and international levels. Given this delicate situation, there must be no room for protectionism since it has been empirically proven that in times of crisis, protectionism stifles development. Therefore, we ask that the Declaration of the Fifth Summit promote borders that remain open to the trade of goods and services as an effective tool for development.

We are convinced that, from this crisis, if we set ourselves to it and learn how to work together toward a common goal, we can create opportunities by opening new roads. To do this, we must be willing to create, innovate and change.

The private sector is here to communicate our most emphatic and decided commitment to working hand in hand with governments and civil society to move our economies forward, and the Trinidad and Tobago Summit offers a great opportunity for us, together, to lay out the most realistic and practical map to attain human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability in the Americas.

In order to face the financial and economic crisis and existing major social pressures, the region needs a vision of long-term development to generate wealth and employment. To reach this goal, and for it to have a social overtone, it is crucial to have a broad and authentic, constructive, effective and institutionalized social dialogue that promotes a climate of trust among governments, businessmen and workers; one that, with the contribution and participation of organized civil society, contributes to prioritizing, harmonizing and achieving consensus on different challenges that are common to us; one that ensures social peace, wellbeing for all and the sustainable development of businesses.

As for human prosperity, we believe that it is essential to recognize that quality education is the foundation for citizenship, to ensure greater opportunities and proper human and social development. Educational policies and professional training must respond to the needs of the markets and include, as a priority, employability and the development of a business spirit. The Trinidad and Tobago Declaration must address this need in an innovative manner, stressing the important role of public-private alliances, supported by academic institutions and NGOs, in the design and implementation of training programs that ensure the competitiveness of our labor force.

Equally important is the development of entrepreneurship and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSEs) as the driving force for the growth of our economies and the source of employment so necessary for prosperity. The Declaration of the Fifth Summit must reflect the promotion of legal frameworks that help reduce illegal and informal economies, thus becoming a part of the formal sector of the economy is less difficult and more attractive as a tool for overcoming social inequalities. We urge the reduction of the costs and time required for setting up and doing business, the need to promote innovative mechanisms that facilitate public-private alliances to offer financing for MSEs, as well as incentives to incorporate them into the value chain.

With regard to energy, we urge the development of a medium- and long-term comprehensive strategy for cooperation among countries, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to promote energy integration and the development of alternative sources of energy, taking advantage of successful experiences.

Time is of the essence. We must increase efforts to reduce our dependence on oil and promote the use of clean energies, including using environmental certificates that provide market value for the use of this type of energy.

The private sector must, and is willing, to play a key role in environmental sustainability. To do this, governments must develop a framework of comprehensive policies and necessary regulations; it is important to ensure that all businesses operate in such a way that those committed to environmental protection are not at a disadvantage compared to those that do not have the same commitment. We must promote the value of natural resources and develop natural resource markets at the regional level, as is the case with carbon credits, for which our hemisphere has a great potential.

These are some of the specific recommendations you will find in the document containing the contributions of the private sector that we have submitted to you.

In conclusion, allow us to emphasize the important role of public-private alliances in achieving the objectives of the Summit, as a way to bridge the gaps between the mandates of the Summit and its implementation; but a public-private alliance must include all social actors and must be founded on genuine efforts for social cohesion in order to face the principal challenges in a joint and concerted effort that can lead us to what must be our common destiny.

Based on all of the above, we commit ourselves, prior to the Summit, to begin to identify and foster greater coordination of public-private alliances that can support the implementation of specific goals that contribute to human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability. In order to follow up on this proposal, we will work with the organizations "Private Sector of the Americas," "Forum Empresa," and "CEAL." We see the

need to create a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that enables us to make these commitments a reality over time, in a way that goes beyond short-term leaderships in the different sectors, with a view to ensuring continuity in implementing the proposed and agreed to initiatives.

In closing, we are convinced, honored friends at the head table and distinguished representatives of the Member States, that the FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS must be a forum for concrete proposals aimed at achieving the objectives of human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability, with open minds, willing to change and work together, without prejudices or ideologies. Otherwise, we shall not have met the mission that concerns all of those present here today: "TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF OUR PEOPLE FOR A BETTER AMERICA."