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March 30, 1999

President
Chair of the Committee of Government Representatives
On Civil Society Participation
Tripartite Committee (Ref. Civil Society)
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
1825 K Street NW, Suite 1120
Washington DC 20006

Dear Sir or Madam:

The comments below are in response to the Open Invitation to Civil Society in FTAA Participating Countries.

We, the undersigned organizations, represent a diverse group of international and domestic women's organizations, policy research organizations, development organizations, and others that are concerned with increasing international development assistance to improve women's lives and in ensuring that trade policies benefit working women from all social sectors in the U.S. and abroad.

Our comments are addressed to the issues of:

- 1) Participation of Civil Society
- 2) Trade, Gender, and Social Impact Assessment

We have two key recommendations. On the issue of Participation of Civil Society, the CGR should ensure that civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, and others have the same level of access to the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) accorded other consultative bodies.

On the issue of trade linkages to gender and other social considerations, we recommend that the United States (and other countries) initiate and/or participate in studies that assess the social impacts of the FTAA, with particular attention given to the gender impacts of the FTAA. These studies should be widely disseminated throughout the hemisphere. No conclusive action should be taken on the FTAA until these assessments are completed and distributed.

Participation of Civil Society