

AGENDA FOR THE AMERICAS 2005



Report of the U.S. Policy Task Force
of the Inter-American Dialogue

March 2005

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Foreword

This report—Agenda for the Americas—was produced by a special Inter-American Dialogue task force on U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere led by former president of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso and former U.S. trade representative Carla Hills, who also serve respectively as the Dialogue’s co-chair and co-vice chair. We assembled the task force in response to the growing concerns of our members that U.S. policy in the Americas is not adequately serving the interests of either the United States or the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Our objective was to identify policies and approaches that would enable Washington to take better advantage of the enormous opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation with the governments of the region.

This report is mainly addressed to President George W. Bush and other U.S. policy leaders in the executive branch and Congress. Its recommendations are designed to restore Latin America and the Caribbean to a place that is high on the U.S. foreign policy agenda—in the interests of both the United States and region. After all, there is no other region in the world where the United States can better highlight its commitment to democracy, economic progress, and social opportunity. And we are convinced that a more democratic, prosperous, and equal Latin America will, in turn, bring major economic, political, and security benefits to the United States. Our central proposal calls for the U.S. government to join with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean to establish robust partnerships to foster trade liberalization and economic growth, develop new migration policies, combat crime and violence, and strengthen democratic governance.

The membership of the task force includes public and private leaders from across the hemisphere, drawn from a diversity of nationalities, backgrounds, and political perspectives. We are grateful to them for the ideas and work they contributed to the preparation of the report. This is a consensus document. Not every signer agrees with every phrase in the text, but each

of them endorses the report's overall content and tone, and supports its principal recommendations.

The task force leaders—Carla Hills and Fernando Henrique Cardoso—deserve special gratitude for their creative guidance of our deliberations, and their many valuable substantive and stylistic contributions. The Dialogue's Director of Caribbean Affairs Dan Erikson joined me in directing this initiative. We are all particularly grateful to the Tinker Foundation for covering the costs of conducting this exercise and to the Ford Foundation for its broad support of the Dialogue's program on U.S. policy.

Peter Hakim

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Agenda for the Americas 2005

U.S. relations with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are firmly grounded in shared values and based on genuine friendships. The region offers the United States enormous opportunities for productive, mutually beneficial ties. With an array of converging interests and goals, Washington and the governments of Latin America repeatedly say they want closer links to one another. Yet, in recent years, the United States and Latin America have increasingly been pursuing different agendas—and growing apart in many ways.

Reenergizing hemispheric cooperation will require sustained U.S. policy engagement with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. A relatively modest additional U.S. investment of effort and resources in Latin America could have a huge payoff. It would help advance democratic values throughout the Americas, foster economic and social development in the region, and strengthen the security and economy of the United States. It would bolster ties with the nations in Latin America at a time when the United States needs partners and allies across the world. Neglecting Latin America and the Caribbean, or taking the region for granted, would put all of these U.S. priorities at risk.

- Latin America should be high on the U.S. foreign policy agenda. There is no other region in the world where the United States can better highlight its commitment to democracy and economic progress. A democratic and prosperous Latin America will, in turn, bring major economic, political, and security benefits to the United States. Thirty-two Latin American and Caribbean nations (all but Cuba) now regularly elect their leaders and enjoy the basic freedoms of speech, press, and assembly. Yet, governing institutions—particularly national legislatures and judicial systems—are weak and vulnerable in much of the region. In

many nations, democratic rules are circumvented, and violence continues to be an unwelcome feature of politics.

- U.S. citizens have a huge stake in Latin America's prosperity and social advancement. Today, the United States exports some \$150 billion per year to Latin America, about 20 percent of total U.S. sales abroad—and the potential for future growth is huge. Although trailing off in the most recent period, U.S. foreign direct investment in Latin America, has, for the past decade, averaged some \$12 billion per year. More than one-third of the nation's foreign oil purchases come from Latin America. The successful completion of negotiations toward the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) would open a spectrum of new economic opportunities for the United States and every other nation of the hemisphere.
- U.S. security is at stake in Latin America. The long U.S.-Mexican border and the country's proximity to the Caribbean and Central America make U.S. security collaboration with these states essential. A few countries, notably Haiti, Venezuela, and Colombia, are continuing sources of regional instability. The region is the origin of most illicit drugs consumed by Americans. Unresolved border disputes in Latin America threaten peace in the hemisphere. Neither the United States nor the nations of Latin America can successfully deal with these troubling situations alone.

The United States needs a broad, inclusive strategy for dealing with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean as a region, but no single policy or set of U.S. policies will suit all 33 countries. Although joined by geography, culture, language, and historical experiences, differences among Latin American nations are profound—ranging across the size and diversity of their populations, the magnitude and dynamism of their economies, the nature and intensity of the social challenges they confront, and the quality of their governance.

Latin American nations also greatly differ in the intensity and nature of their relations with the United States. Mexico, Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean are close neighbors that are linked in many ways to the United States. The war on drugs across the Andes and the battle against armed groups in Colombia

have also engaged heavy U.S. attention. As a major oil supplier, Venezuela has had a special link to the United States. U.S. ties with most other countries of South America are more limited. Brazil and the Southern Cone nations of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay have the most diverse international relations.

But one constant exists for nearly all Latin American and Caribbean countries: their relations with the United States have not been satisfactory for some time.

An Agenda of Partnership in the Americas

We urge the U.S. government to join with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Canada as well, to establish partnerships to advance four strategic goals—prosperity, security, democracy, and good governance—across the Americas. The partnerships would be directed at fostering trade liberalization and economic growth, developing new migration policies, combating crime and violence, and strengthening democratic rule. These partnerships should include every state committed to constructive participation.

1. Partnership for Trade Liberalization

By joining in partnership with Latin America's agricultural exporters, especially Brazil, the United States can substantially increase the prospects for a successful outcome of the all-important Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Like the United States, Brazil and other Latin American nations want to curtail export subsidies and trade-distorting internal supports to agricultural producers—but progress at Doha will require agreement with Europe and many other nations. Because each is influential with different constituencies, U.S. cooperation with Brazil can contribute significantly to that progress.

A breakthrough in Doha on agriculture could set the stage for the successful completion of a strong FTAA, which would provide the essential underpinnings for long-term productive ties between the United States and Latin America. A robust FTAA would stimulate regional economic activity by opening markets

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for Latin American producers and enhancing the region's ability to attract foreign investment and inflows of new technology. The FTAA would firmly lock in the policy reforms that have been widely adopted across Latin America in the past 15 years and help to reinforce transparency, the rule of law, and property rights. All this would, in turn, contribute in numerous ways to the prosperity and security of the United States.

U.S. bilateral free trade agreements with specific countries and subregions can also encourage domestic reform, make trade and investment rules more transparent, and generally contribute to Latin America's economic advancement. The United States now has agreements in force with Chile and Mexico. A similar pact—the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)—has been signed, but not yet ratified, with the five nations of Central America and the Dominican Republic. And negotiations are under way with Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru (Bolivia is participating as an observer). The early approval of CAFTA by the U.S. Congress would be an important signal of U.S. commitment to the regional trade agenda—and to Latin America's development. However, these smaller agreements cannot substitute for the FTAA, a comprehensive accord that would bring every economy in the Americas together in a single, inclusive arrangement.

Free trade is a contentious issue in the United States and is heatedly debated in many Latin American countries as well. Citizens across the hemisphere need to be persuaded that trade agreements will, in fact, bolster growth and raise standards of living—and not push down wages and send jobs elsewhere. It is crucial that the United States join with other nations to take steps to mitigate the severe dislocations that free trade can produce. Together, the governments of the hemisphere should develop and adequately support programs for workers and communities that are harmed by new trade arrangements and technological advances, and ensure that transition periods in sensitive sectors allow sufficient time for needed adjustments. Additionally, the United States should continue its support for building capacity in the smaller economies of Latin America and the Caribbean for negotiating and implementing free trade arrangements.

2. Partnership on Migration Policies

Starting with Mexico, the U.S. government must engage with the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean to develop new approaches for dealing with migration. Migration is no longer simply a social and economic issue, but has taken on critical political and security dimensions. The size of legal and illegal migrant streams from Latin America is enormous and growing. About 11 percent of the U.S. population, or 34 million people, is foreign born, with the majority from Latin America. Roughly two-thirds are naturalized U.S. citizens or lawful residents, while one-third have no legal status. The massive flow of remittances from the United States to Latin America is now over \$30 billion per year and continues to expand.

No one is happy with current U.S. immigration policies. They have raised the costs and risks of crossing the border irregularly but have done little, if anything, to stem unlawful migration or prevent undocumented workers from finding employment in the United States. Moreover, they keep a large share of illegal migrants in the underground economy—which raises an array of difficult social, economic, and security problems.

There is considerable agreement on the core elements of a fresh U.S. approach to migration. They include:

- Authorizing an increased number of migrants to come to the United States each year to work legally for temporary periods. Substantial increases in temporary work visas—not only for agriculture but also for other sectors—would recognize the dramatic changes that have occurred in the U.S. labor market.
- Developing procedures to regularize the situation of some migrants who first entered the United States illegally, offering them opportunities to earn, over time, the right to lawful residence and perhaps citizenship at some point. Some form of official U.S. identity should be provided to illegal residents to enhance U.S. security and law enforcement—and migrants should be allowed reasonable access to health, education, and other public services that are likely to encourage law-abiding and productive behavior.
- Building a system where the goal is safe, legal, and orderly movements of people. This will require regulation of migrant

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flows in ways that respond to labor market demands and measures to reduce the likelihood of sizeable new illegal flows in the future.

The challenge is translating these principles into policy prescriptions that are politically viable and respond to U.S. security requirements. Many details need to be worked out: How many temporary workers should be admitted per year? What precise rules should govern their entry and residence in the United States? Should they become eligible for permanent status? Which undocumented migrants should be permitted to apply for legal status, and what should be required of them? What responsibilities should migrant sending countries be asked to assume? What responsibilities should employers who benefit from foreign workers have?

President Bush has made immigration reform a high priority for his second term. It is critical the administration and Congress make a serious effort to address these questions. The best way to proceed is to discuss them fairly and openly within the United States, with the U.S. Latino population, and with the governments of Latin America, starting with Mexico and then extending to other nations.

3. Partnership to Confront Crime and Violence

Washington needs to join forces with Latin American governments in a partnership to fight the region's pervasive crime and violence. The United States has a vital role to play in building a strong regional coalition, guided by human rights and democratic values, to battle against drug trafficking, illegal weapons sales, and money laundering—which together finance a substantial share of Latin America's criminal activity and can be a source of financing for terrorism as well. Along with economic failure and joblessness, widespread crime and violence are what has most eroded citizen confidence in Latin America's democratic governments.

Crime is a worsening nightmare for most Latin Americans. The region leads the world in kidnappings. Its homicide rate is twice the global average. In Central America, youth gangs have thrown cities into turmoil. Mexico had to call on its army to wrest control of a prison from accused drug kingpins. Brazil has considered using military force to confront drug dealers in Rio de Janeiro. The

situation is aggravated in many places by the corruption, disarray, and inadequate financing of police forces and judicial systems.

No single country can successfully fight drug trafficking. It will take many governments working together regionally and globally to deal with the problem effectively. The success of drug eradication in Bolivia and Peru a few years ago pushed coca cultivation north to Colombia and intensified that country's armed conflict. Eradication and interdiction can destabilize weak governments. The most difficult challenge is to replace drug cultivation as a source of employment and livelihood. U.S. support for economic and social development in rural areas can strengthen law enforcement.

Washington can also contribute by stepping up efforts to control illegal arms exports to Latin America and reviewing the practice and consequences of deporting convicted felons to their countries of origin. These deportees often end up leading the vicious youth gangs that are so destructive in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Expanded U.S. military exchanges with Latin American forces might also help support anti-crime efforts in the region. It is up to Latin America's civilian authorities to decide the kind and extent of military-to-military programs, if any, they want to see conducted with the United States.

Weak, impoverished states that lack the authority to enforce their laws present particular dangers for both the United States and their Latin American neighbors. These states are often centers of drug production and transit, havens for money laundering, and sources of regional instability.

Colombia has represented such a threat for some time, although in recent years it has gained more effective control over its territory from guerrillas and paramilitary forces, curtailed coca production, and managed to sharply reduce armed violence. U.S. assistance of some \$3 billion in the past four years has been crucial to Colombia's accomplishments. That support should continue in order to help Colombia sustain these advances, improve its unsatisfactory human rights record, and make progress toward peace. The country also needs the political backing and cooperation of neighboring nations.

Haiti—the hemisphere's poorest and most troubled country—demands urgent attention from the United States and other

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governments in the region. It is virtually a failed state that threatens internal violence and mass migration of its people to the United States and neighboring countries. Haiti already serves as a prime distribution center for drugs originating in South America. For Haiti's prospects to improve, the United States will have to join with many other nations in a sustained effort to remake the country's politics and economy. It is encouraging that Brazil and other Latin American countries have taken on peacekeeping responsibilities in Haiti.

4. Partnership to Support Democratic Governance

Nothing advances U.S. interests more in this hemisphere than the spread of democracy and the rule of law. A robust U.S.-Latin American partnership to protect and strengthen democratic politics in the region is vital. Despite Latin America's immense strides in building free societies, democratic institutions are fragile in much of the region and endangered in some countries. A hemispheric partnership would support national and regional efforts to enhance democratic governance, vigorously oppose violations of basic freedoms and human rights, and defend elected leaders and representative institutions when they come under attack.

To make this partnership work, the United States must be steadfast in its support of democratic politics. Under no circumstances should Washington endorse—or even appear to endorse—an unconstitutional transfer of power or withhold the means to prevent one. The United States should always strive to protect elected leaders. No matter how much it prefers one candidate to another, it should respect the electoral processes of other nations and avoid taking sides.

Washington has demonstrated that it can work constructively with other hemispheric governments to advance democracy. U.S.-Latin American cooperation has, over time, greatly expanded the authority and responsibility of the Organization of American States (OAS) to respond to threats against democracy, and it has helped repair constitutional ruptures in several countries. The 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter strengthened the ability of Western Hemisphere governments to act collectively to defend democratic institutions.

The United States and other member governments could and should put the OAS on a more secure financial basis and support needed changes in structure and procedures. OAS human rights agencies should be reinforced, enlarged, and better funded. Its electoral monitoring capacities could be expanded and strengthened. But the essential framework for safeguarding democracy is in place. Effectively addressing today's problems requires that the U.S. and Latin American governments make better use of that framework.

Venezuela is a cause for grave concern for those who worry about democracy in Latin America. International observers confirmed President Chavez's victory in the August 2004 referendum to decide whether he should continue in office, but he has shown little respect for democratic procedures. Venezuela remains bitterly polarized, and its representative institutions are barely functioning. The country's unsettled politics could produce instability throughout the Andean region.

A regional partnership of democracies is the best approach to foster democratic renewal in Venezuela. The United States should join with other countries of the region to urge President Chávez and his opponents to work toward an agreed-upon agenda for democracy and political reconciliation, consistent with the hemisphere's Democratic Charter. Because Chávez is the head of state, the regional coalition should urge him to take the first steps toward finding common ground. Steady, collective pressure by many countries is the best way to meet Venezuela's challenges.

Cuba is the one Latin American country that has resisted any political opening. The United States should continue to prod the Cuban government to end its repressive practices and improve its human rights record. However, the central goal of the U.S. government in Cuba should be a peaceful and successful transition toward democratic politics and market economics.

The U.S. government should start by dismantling the web of restrictions that prevents Cuba's integration into hemispheric activities. The clear lesson from Eastern Europe is that the more contact a closed society has with open societies, the quicker and less painful its transition. It is time for the United States to shift

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from a policy of isolation to one of engagement and dialogue. This change will open the way for U.S. collaboration with the governments of Latin America (and those of Canada, Europe, and Japan) on Cuba-related issues. The U.S. government will best serve its own interests in Cuba by working with regional partners rather than by seeking to promote change unilaterally.

Responses by the United States and other countries to the internal governance problems of any nation will be most effective if they are developed and implemented multilaterally, fully respect the affected nation's constitutional principles, and engage a wide range of national political actors. Neighboring countries will almost always have a special part to play, and they should be involved in any initiative—from negotiations to political pressures to sanctions. Washington can and should exert leadership, make use of its influence, and help mobilize others, but it needs to work collectively with partners to succeed.

The Special Importance of Brazil and Mexico

In working to develop strong U.S.-Latin American partnerships for dealing with critical regional issues, the U.S. government needs to ground its efforts solidly in cooperation and consultation. To this end, it is critical that Washington fully engage Brazil and Mexico on every issue of hemispheric significance. These countries are Latin America's two largest and most influential nations. Together, they account for more than half of the region's population, territory, and economic activity. U.S. policy success in Latin America will depend on Brazil's and Mexico's economic and political success—and on Washington's ability to sustain strong and productive relationships with these two nations.

The United States has a more extensive and varied relationship with neighboring Mexico than with any other Latin American country. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement went into force a decade ago, Mexico has become America's second largest trading partner, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all U.S. trade with Latin America; the two nations are deeply engaged in a great many other ways as well. There are few countries anywhere

with which U.S. cooperation is more important or yields a higher return, whether on matters of economy and finance, energy, security, drug trafficking and other crimes, or migration. The central challenge for the two governments in the coming period is how to manage the longer term integration of their countries, which is already proceeding rapidly.

The United States needs Mexico's help to pursue its broader hemispheric agenda successfully. Resolving the migration question will strengthen Mexico's ability to be a constructive partner on many other issues.

Like Mexico, Brazil can significantly affect the capacity of the U.S. government to advance its regional policy agenda. Brazil has consistently pursued an independent and forceful foreign policy and has, at times, clashed with Washington. It is an important global actor, and now widely regarded as deserving a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

The U.S. government should view Brazil's growing influence positively. A stronger Brazil allows for broader and more strategic collaboration with the United States—as has occurred, for example, in Haiti and at the Doha round of trade talks. But effective cooperation will require negotiation and compromise on both sides. The challenge is for Washington and Brasilia to find ways to accommodate their different national interests and goals, tolerate often-divergent political perspectives, and work together toward common objectives.

Most of all, however, Washington needs to remember that it is the economic and political success of Brazil, Mexico, and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean that best serves U.S. interests in the hemisphere. The central aims of U.S. policy in the region should be a Latin America that is increasingly prosperous and secure, more socially just, and better and more democratically governed—a Latin America that can meet the aspirations of its citizens. That is what will most expand economic opportunities in the United States, protect U.S. security, advance U.S. values, and create for the United States effective partners and allies to address common problems.

The success of Latin America and the Caribbean will create effective partners and allies for the United States.

Supplemental Comments

Alberto Ibargüen

Military-to-military programs with the United States have value beyond military or police effectiveness. The U.S. Southern Command in Miami is an effective organization for maintaining military respect for stable, democratic societies led by civilians.

A policy of engagement is seductive to people of good will. But it is unlikely to succeed without a willing partner. In the case of Cuba, Fidel Castro has not been willing and nothing suggests that he will change. A policy of engagement focused on a future after him is another matter, full of hope and possibility.

Abraham F. Lowenthal

Our long-standing goals of democratic governance, human rights, economic growth and social equity are harder to achieve and sustain in a world of ethnic violence, religious extremism, terrorism and repressive security responses, and the restructuring of the world economy. It is particularly important for the Americas to take account of the rapidly changing role of China, India, and Asia more generally in the world economy, and the impact on Latin American competitiveness.

Bernardo Vega

Economic integration in the hemisphere should follow the European model, with Canada and the United States providing funds for training and development, and accepting asymmetrical free trade schedules and more liberal migration policies. What has been negotiated at the subregional level (in CAFTA, for example) should be subject to more favored nation treatment in an eventual FTAA. New approaches on migration policy should apply equally, regardless of citizenship of origin.

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Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Co-Chair) was two-term president of Brazil. Cardoso is a founding member of the Inter-American Dialogue and is now president of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Institute in São Paulo.

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Bernardo Vega served as ambassador to the United States from the Dominican Republic and was editor-in-chief of *El Caribe*.

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THE INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE

The Inter-American Dialogue is the leading U.S. center for policy analysis, exchange, and communication on issues in Western Hemisphere affairs. The Dialogue brings together public and private leaders from across the Americas to address key hemispheric problems and opportunities.

The Dialogue's select membership of 100 distinguished citizens from throughout the Americas includes political, business, academic, media, and other nongovernmental leaders. Eleven Dialogue members served as presidents of their countries and more than a dozen have served at the cabinet level.

Dialogue activities are directed to generating new policy ideas and practical proposals for action, and getting these ideas and proposals to government and private decision makers. The Dialogue also offers diverse Latin American and Caribbean voices access to U.S. policy debates and discussions. Based in Washington, the Dialogue conducts its work throughout the hemisphere. A majority of our Board of Directors are from Latin American and Caribbean nations, as are more than half of the Dialogue's members and participants in our other leadership networks and task forces.

Since 1982—through successive Republican and Democratic administrations and many changes of leadership elsewhere in the hemisphere—the Dialogue has helped shape the agenda of issues and choices in inter-American relations.



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