

## **Introduction**

For reasons of its fortuitous location and crucial economic interest, Florida has been extremely supportive of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the negotiation process that began in September 1998 in Miami. The states business and public sectors believe firmly that Florida's future is intimately linked to the successful completion of the negotiations by or before the year 2005. At the Cartagena, Belo Horizonte, San Jose, Toronto and Buenos Aires meetings of the Americas Business forum, held in conjunction with the Hemispheric Trade Ministerials, Florida's public and private sector representatives have repeatedly demonstrated their deep commitment to the FTAA process. Indeed, efforts of the state delegation resulted in the initial location of the FTAA Secretariat in Miami, where the first round of the discussions was effectively managed from 1998-2001.

This paper represents a consensus of views expressed by leaders of Florida's business and public affairs communities on the movement toward hemispheric free trade by 2005. The initial document was developed through broad-based, statewide consultation, carried out from April 1999 through January 2000 by the Summit of the Americas Center (SOAC) at Florida International University (FIU) and Steel Hector & Davis LLP. Business and public affairs leaders throughout the state received copies of the document, which was based on the results of a statewide survey, along with requests for their input. Trade and economic development specialists from across Florida held meetings in Miami and submitted their remarks on the document to SOAC. Drafts of the position paper have been widely circulated and posted on the Summit of the Americas website. This version was updated based on meetings and consultations with a Florida Position Paper Working Group and members of the Team Florida FTAA Board. It has been submitted to the Americas Business Forum organizers for consideration at the November 1, 2002 Quito Meeting.

The final document was authored and edited by Eduardo A. Gamarra of FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Center, Carl A. Cira of the Summit of the Americas Center, and Shanker A. Singham of Steel Hector & Davis LLP. Principal contributors were" Hugh Simon, Florida Undersecretary of State for International Affairs; Joanne Emslie-Korn, of the Jacksonville Chamber of commerce; Gilbert Lee Sandler and Lauren Perez of Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, PA; Martha Roberts of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Michael Stuart of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association; Ines Calderon of Florida FTAA, Inc; and Maria Strong of Smith & Metalitz LLP and the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA). Elisa N. Gallo, Cristina C. Lopez-Gottardi and Vilma Zamora of the Summit of the Americas Center contributed to and coordinated this effort.