

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT

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Donor: Inter Pares

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Project Title: International Symposium "Diálogo Sudamericano otra integración es posible."

Project Director: Diana Avila Paulette Executive Director PCS	Reporting Period: 1 June 2005 – 20 May 2006
Donation Period: 1 June 2005 – 20 May 2006	Project Director's Signature:

1. General Summary of Project Objectives

The International Symposium Project “South American Dialogue: Another Integration is Possible” proposed to facilitate mechanisms of collaboration and coordination between a diverse set of civil society actors from local, regional and international levels. The aim was to help generate new knowledge out of a process of dialogue that could permit forward movement towards the formulation of new strategies and strategic focal points for conflict prevention and peace-building in Latin America. These proposals were to be subsequently documented, published, and disseminated through a process of public education, advocacy, and consciousness-raising directed towards a broad regional audience. The project sought to deepen debate and relations of affinity between active sectors of Latin American civil society by stimulating greater commitments to interaction, mutual support and transnational collaboration in confronting the volatility, instability and uprootedness that presently prevails in Latin America. This was to be accomplished through further strengthening the capacity of international cooperation for the prevention of conflicts in the region through significant political and humanitarian action based on active dialogue between local civil society and regional institutions.

2. Summary of Activities and Objectives (Accomplished and Pending)

With the aim of identifying the prerequisites and opportunities for action concerning humanitarian and political collaboration in support of persons affected by volatile conflict and post-conflict situations in Latin America, including conflict-prevention and peace-building, the project involved consultations, recompilation of proposals and the development of a dialogue between a select group of civil society actors, international NGOs and political parties from the region. The unfolding process constituted a collective investigation into the implications and relevance of the most important geopolitical tendencies in Latin America, with a particular emphasis upon the member countries of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR), analysing the existing conflicts that limit the present visions and relations in the region. The project sought to contribute to a process where participants could transcend the stagnating dynamics of national politics marked by tensions, conflicts, volatility and instability. This amounted to creating an opportunity for wider incorporation into ongoing activities involving a critical and up-to-date analysis of regional tendencies and global events. In so doing, new opportunities for political action would be opened in the region.

The project also aimed to treat issues of pressing concern to the participants themselves such as the regional escalation of conflicts within and between nations and the implications of an intensifying U.S. intervention in the region being mounted in the context of a “global war against terror.” At the same time, these concerns were

mediated and informed by an exploration of other important tendencies such as the rapidly changing political scenario between and within Latin American countries, the proliferation of citizen movements based on social democracy, and emerging opportunities for citizens to participate and influence their new democratic governments. The struggle of popular forces to survive and to consolidate themselves in the region is taking place following a generation of retrograde governments marked by prolonged periods of violent repression, widespread violations of human rights and an elite-led regional integration process.

As part of the process of encouraging a more inclusive regional dialogue on integration, a Symposium was held in Quito on November 21-22, 2005 in collaboration with the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar, designed to help promote a closer relationship with regional integration institutions and the academic sector of the region. If indeed economic and political cooperation as well as the interdependence between nations has steadily increased, the Symposium sought to examine more precisely the ways in which this trend can promote peace and long term stability. The organisers shared a consensus that a more inclusive and participatory type of interdependence and peace building cannot arise spontaneously nor by imposition but must instead emerge organically from within the region. For this reason, it was deemed very important that key civil society actors utilise existing challenges and opportunities so that their role could be catalytic in the creation of a future alternative. This implies a continuous process of critically exploring and reinforcing the ways that these actors might best develop their potential as social agents and thus transcend historically established patterns of conflict and violence.

ACTIVITIES REPORT

- **Preparatory Consultations and Outreach Process for the Symposium**

The initial meeting of the Symposium Organising Committee took place August 19-20 in Lima in order to begin the process of creating a common agenda and concretising the preparations for holding the Symposium towards the end of 2005. During the month of October, a subsequent coordination meeting was held in Lima, taking advantage of the visit of various international figures and inviting future Symposium participants. A substantial synergy was achieved within the coordinating team and it was in these meetings that the basic framework of the programme and a detailed list of proposed presenters was elaborated, capitalising on the national and regional contacts afforded by the members of the organising committee. During this period, the Terms of Reference were prepared for the invited participants by PCS and Ricardo Dello Buono in the capacity of project consultant. An essential part of the preparatory phase consisted in selected members of the organising committee making direct visits and establishing key contacts throughout the region in order to consolidate the broad scope of participation essential to the success of the symposium.

- **Convening the Quito Symposium**

The Quito Symposium eventually brought together 75 notables from around the region, including 30 women and participants from 15 countries including not only Latin America but North America and Europe as well. These participants came in representation of political parties, social movements, academic institutions, NGOs, regional institutions of integration and international cooperation agencies.

PCS along with the UASB opened the event with a welcome to participants, followed by an inaugural presentation concerning the history of regional integration in Latin America. The Symposium then proceeded to unfold through five periods of dialogue, related to the principal issues discussed in four thematic panels (where pre-assigned papers were presented) and an additional panel involving reflections concerning the future. The thematic panels include presentations concerning: (I) Advances and Limits of Existing Integration Schemes; (II) Social Processes of Integration in South America; (III) Counter-tendencies to an Inclusive Integration; and (IV) The Role of Social Movement and Political Parties in Regional Integration. Session (V) Looking to the Future included the presentation of reflections from the point of view of political parties, social movements, the academic sector, and agencies of international cooperation.

A principal goal of the symposium was to facilitate a space of intensive dialogue where an exchange could develop and continue in the region following the conclusion of the event. To this end, each panel included an extended and structured session of dialogue following the presentation of papers. Rules of procedure were implemented in the dialogue including a 3 minute limit on all commentaries; a limit of one commentary per person per dialogue session; and a concerted attempt by the organisers to distribute commentaries across countries present and by institutional categories of actors. To help facilitate the implementation of these rules of dialogue, the commentaries of the participants were conducted by the use of wireless microphones that were handed to and retired from each participant at the end of the three minute limit. The order of commentaries was organised by handing out numbers in accordance with the established guidelines mentioned above. The physical layout of the event helped facilitate this process, having established a place for each participant with their names visibly posted “UN style,” divided into concentric sections that grouped together political parties, social movements, NGOs, academics, etc. Every attempt was made to encourage a sustained dialogue during the event, even during coffee breaks and social hours. Finally, the event closed with a session and discussion session chaired by the Event Organisers concerning “How to Continue the Dialogue,” followed by a brief set of closing remarks at which time an evaluation sheet was distributed and filled out by all participants.

- **Follow-up Activities in Consolidation of the South American Regional Dialogue**

A series of follow-up activities for consolidating the dialogue that emerged following the symposium have been carried out. These include activities of documentation, dissemination of results through networks, and collective political actions across national boundaries. Efforts to continue the established dialogue have included coordinations among various actors and visits to various countries. The dissemination of presentations has been carried out via the preparation of a CD that included all presentations and a list of all participants. Selected papers were also posted on the PCS website. A significant contribution to follow-up has involved the preparation of a book that featured a systematisation of the Symposium. The book has been prepared and scheduled to go to print in June, 2006. Various book presentations are being scheduled pending the publication of the work. In addition to presenting the results of the Symposium in various regional forums, planning was initiated to reproduce similar dialogue events in various countries in the region.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

Local and international actors/participants have broadened and developed their capacities, incorporating more comprehensive issues into their agendas that transcend national dynamics and allow for greater opportunities for assimilating a critical regional and global analysis. Emphasis was placed on recognising the relevance of policies for peace-building and the deepening of democracy in the region. The decisions and strategies that were adopted concerning networks and forums on the part of political parties and social networks permitted the opening of communications between actors and expanded the possibilities for better synergies. The relevance of providing support to regional integration initiatives, inter-regional migration and other related social processes has been assimilated by the participants. Other results achieved included the following:

- ***The Quito Symposium achieved a broad commitment from participants to continue the South American Dialogue initiated at that meeting.*** The experience was evaluated positively by participants as demonstrated by their responses to the questionnaire administered at the conclusion of the event. The quality of presentations, dialogue, organisation, and diversity of points of view all received very positive scores. This consensus seems to affirm that the Quito Symposium created a dynamic space of dialogue in the region where social movements, political parties, and the academic sector along with NGOs, international cooperation agencies and governmental institutions can help form a new consensus that transcends national borders and recognises the diversity of national and developmental experiences in the construction of democratic and more inclusive processes.

- **Issues were defined for inclusion into the follow-up activities of the South American regional dialogue initiated in Quito.** Through an intense and structured series of dialogue sessions, the participants expressed the need to incorporate diverse themes into the ongoing regional dialogue such as gender disparities; asymmetries and disparities; critical reflections on the FTAA; concepts of complementarity and compensation; concrete experiences of more inclusive forms of regional integration from below that include the dimensions of migration, networks and regional movements; risks and counter-tendencies to alternative forms of integration, including increasing militarisation; a fresh look at borders as spaces of integration rather than as limits between countries; and a renewed consideration of the need for regional dialogue on the conflict in Colombia.
- **Methodological recommendations concerning the format of future sessions of dialogue were compiled.** The symposium helped to concretise proposed methods of improving the quality of civil dialogue throughout the region including an increased presence of social movements; ensuring that future dialogue sessions remain broad in orientation and free of any constraints imposed by donors or sponsors; recognition of the need to construct an agenda that can have a significant impact on governments; broadening the reflections of dialogue towards the rest of Latin America; establishing thematic working groups; holding thematic events that focus on formulating concrete proposals; disseminating by publication the results of dialogues; searching for sustainable operational formulas in the absence of donors; establishing greater inclusiveness between academic, political and popular sectors through attention to the type of language utilised in dialogue; and transferring the discussion on integration from inter-governmental elites towards social movements.
- **The Quito Symposium yielded its own strategic proposals concerning the articulation and insertion of an ongoing South American Dialogue.** Such proposals included the creation of networks and the joining of forces with existing initiatives so as to avoid duplication, linking up with similar initiatives in SELA, the Indigenous Parliament of the South American Community of Nations, the MERCOSUR Forum of Universities, MERCOSUR and CAN Political Party Forums; opening up new and permeable spaces in every party, social movement, NGO and in academic circles that can function as “receivers” that favour reproduction of the processes of dialogue; carrying the experience forward to the World Social Forum and the Forum of Sao Paulo; and disseminating the process of dialogue so as to favour popular mobilisation through means such as TELESUR, web sites; publication of annual summaries; creation of an editorial line “Another Integration is Possible,” creation of a more theoretical, academic periodical with four issues per year; and opening up virtual spaces of discussion of written work being generated.
- **The more general impact of the South American Dialogue has included:** the incorporation of a greater emphasis on transcending sectoral and national

issues via an inclusion of integration issues in the agendas of regional organisations and institutions; a broader recognition of the importance of dialogue that accords respect to the roles of all actors; a renewed emphasis on political concertation as an indispensable means of peace-building and deepening democracy; a new sense of working on border issues not solely as focal points of migration problems and flashpoints of conflict over trafficking and militarisation but also as a positive space where practical forms of regional integration can be realised; and greater awareness and appreciation of the importance of deepening the process of regional integration from below.

- ***Difficulties encountered in the Quito Symposium included:*** a weak presence of women's organisations; time limitations imposed on the dialogue sessions; and the last minute cancellations of invited participants.
- ***Continuity in building the South American Dialogue forms part of the ongoing PCS agenda.*** PCS is facilitating virtual spaces of communication and informational exchange between diverse actors, helping to maintain the contacts initiated in the Symposium of Quito. Follow-up events that are more thematically focused are being planned around border issues, migration and integration, with the results of the Quito Symposium to be presented in the discussion spaces that are being offered by regional events such as the World Social Forum. In replicating the experience of Quito, cooperation with regional universities is being utilised in order to facilitate publication and distribution of materials generated by the Quito Symposium.

The future prospects for the continuation of the South American Dialogue process are excellent and convincing. The existence of new mass media spaces such as TELESUR and the growth of virtual networks being shared by regional NGOs offer new possibilities for expanding and deepening the dialogue within the regional civil society. The accumulated experience of impact and outreach towards regional spaces such as those of the Social Forums and the Forum of Sao Paulo constitutes a regional training process for impact and advocacy that will help open access to new spaces such as in SELA, the Ibero-American Summits and the Presidential Summit in 2008. The acute necessity for constant coordination and exclusive dedication to the growing process of dialogue will require that an operational centre be formed within PCS. This will ensure better coordination of a process that has demonstrated significant potential to contribute to the peaceful search of a more inclusive integration.

Peru, May 20, 2006