

PRESS RELEASE

HEMISPHERIC AGREEMENT ON 10 GENERAL COMPETITIVENESS

PRINCIPLES FOR THE AMERICAS

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, October 2011

Ministers, Vice-Ministers, high-level authorities and representatives from public and private competitiveness councils of 30 countries of the Americas, as Members of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC), approved the “Santo Domingo Consensus” and its 10 competitiveness principles on October 5 2011, during the V Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (October 5-7 2011).

Authorities and councils agreed to use these 10 general competitiveness principles as a guide to carry out their work and actions at the regional and national level, according to the interest, context and competitiveness agenda of each country, in order to advance toward a more competitive and prosperous region.

The ten principles outlined seek among other things to promote high-quality education; strengthen the establishment of effective institutions responsible for promoting competitiveness; promote transparency in government administration; prioritize development of human capital; drive the development of a modern and efficient infrastructure; position innovation as a determining factor for competitiveness; improve access to capital for economic stakeholders; promote social entrepreneurship, social corporate responsibility and gender equity; stimulate commerce and integration; and promote efficiency and energy sustainability.

Secretary of State and Executive Director of the National Competitiveness Council of the Dominican Republic, and host of the meeting as Chair *Pro Tempore* of RIAC, highlighted that “countries of the region, with a few exceptions, have been losing competitiveness” with respect to the rest of the world. Therefore, he indicated that “the Santo Domingo Consensus is the first document agreed at the hemispheric level that can help us undertake an agenda to become more competitive as a region” and that can guide our own efforts within our countries as we follow the path toward enhanced competitiveness.”

Countries agreed to report on efforts undertaken and progress achieved on the 10 competitiveness principles at the upcoming RIAC annual meetings in Colombia 2012 and Panama 2013. The information provided will become part of the “Signals of Competitiveness in the Americas” Report, a mechanism designed to benchmark competitiveness progress of countries, define goals and encourage cooperation among members by describing public policies and competitiveness initiatives, presenting information on available offer and demand for cooperation in a systematic fashion. The mechanism will be based on the 10 principles established as priorities.

The Report will “provide content to high-level Inter-American gatherings of ministers, authorities and/or councils of competitiveness.” Country representatives stated that “this reporting tool developed among governments, the business community, academia and civil society will result in the definition and implementation of a medium and long-term agenda with a well-identified set of competitiveness-enhancing priorities and actions to be undertaken in our countries.”

Ministers of Economy, Finance, Industry and Commerce, meeting on October 7, 2011, expressed their support to the agreement reached by the high-level authorities and competitiveness councils at the RIAC annual meeting through a Joint Communiqué. Ministers recommended the adoption of the principles included in the Santo Domingo Consensus and agreed to submit the document for consideration of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas meeting in the VI Summit of the Americas to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, on April 14-15, 2012.

“We emphasize the importance of the ten principles which can guide our actions at the regional, national and sub-national level according to the interest, context and competitiveness agenda of each country, to advance toward a more competitive and prosperous region.” Ministers also highlighted “the importance of submitting the Consensus of Santo Domingo as an input for Inter-American political fora that deal with issues related to competitiveness such as education, science and technology, labor, tourism, sustainable development, among others, including specialized meetings of high-level authorities, Ministerial meetings, and the VI Summit of the Americas in Colombia.”

The OAS Executive Secretary for Integral Development, Jorge Saggiante, representing the Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, pointed out that improving the competitiveness of the region is a “fundamental element” of the work of the Organization, which is aimed at connecting all the hemispheric political processes and policy dialogues in the contexts of the OAS.”

In the annual meeting of RIAC, the Government of Colombia shared its commitment to increase the participation of countries in the annual meeting of 2012 and the goal of improving the competitive capacity in countries to maintain economic activity and strength. The head of the Presidential Council for Public and Private Management, Catalina Crane Arango, said that her government as host of the VI Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) expects that the Forum and the RIAC can become increasingly important to provide support to the task of improving our competitiveness in each of the areas under our responsibility.” The annual RIAC meeting in 2012 will be held next October in the City of Cali, before the VI ACF. Sergio Díaz-Granados, Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism of Colombia, will serve as Chair *Pro Tempore* of RIAC representing the Government of Colombia as host of the next Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF).

Panama will take over the Chair *Pro Tempore* of RIAC in 2013. The National Secretary of Science, Technology and Innovation of Panama, Ruben Berrocal, invited all participants to the VII ACF to be held in Panama and highlighted a few of the recent accomplishments of Panama over the last few years. In particular he referred to the “important steps to make Panama a regional logistics hub and the important investment and work to expand the Panama Canal.”

Michael Camuñez, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance, of the U.S. Department of Commerce, indicated that the United States is very proud to collaborate in RIAC, which has been institutionalized in the context of the Organization of American States. “This is the preeminent hemispheric forum to discuss competitiveness issues and areas that are fundamental for economic growth of our countries and well being of our people.”

The host of the annual RIAC meeting serves as Chair of RIAC. The Vice-chairs of RIAC correspond to the previous and next host of the competitiveness events. The network was launched in Santiago, Chile in 2009 during the III ACF.

The RIAC is a collaborative mechanism to promote dialogue among competitiveness authorities and councils of countries in the Americas and regional and international institutions, promote the exchange of experiences and best practices and the adoption of joint initiatives to strengthen and promote competitiveness in the Americas. The meeting included the participation of 13 regional institutions such as the CABEL, IDB, CAF, ECLAC, Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils, Monterrey TEC, among others.