



WORKSHOP: Mercosur 2010: Challenges and opportunities

1. Introduction

The MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur) created by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in March 1991 (Chile and Bolivia joined the bloc as associated members and Venezuela is in process of being a permanent member), has emerged as one of the most successful regional economic groupings in the developing world. Since its inception, the MERCOSUR has dramatically increased trade within the region, and has become a very useful platform for the member countries to attract foreign direct investment and to engage as a bloc in external negotiations. During 2003-2004, the MERCOSUR Governments renewed regional commitments, strengthening and deepening the integration process that needs to regain its lost dynamism. In successive statements, the MERCOSUR Governments have unequivocally reaffirmed they will to preserve and strengthen the regional bloc, as a tool for South-South cooperation, economic development and competitive insertion in the world markets. In 2008-2010 new regional dimensions such as the South American Nations Unions (UNASUR) emerges as a new platforms for regional cooperation in different levels. This new regional dimension and process integrates Mercosur and the Andean Community as key pieces for a future consolidated bloc.

The Mercosur Economic Research Network (Red Mercosur - MercoNet)¹ was created in 1998 as a result of an academic and consultative process with representatives from the government and civil society. The Network links twelve academic institutions belonging to the four MERCOSUR member countries and aims at bridging the institutional gap originated by the growing demand for timely knowledge for decision making, and the manifest intention on the part of MERCOSUR governments to avoid generating costly, supra-national structures. The International Development Research Center/IDRC- Canada contributed the initial funds for the establishment of the Network and supports its institutional strengthening and core research. During its twelve years of existence, MercoNet has worked with many partners and policy-makers, has shown its ability to produce and disseminate highly relevant research outputs directed to the main actors of the integration process, including governments, the private sector and the academic community. Since 2009, MercoNet has expanded its thematic areas to the broader development agenda (including research on climate change among other issues) as well as its geographical coverage working in partnership with research institutions and universities from Chile, Mexico, etc.

¹ For more information see: <http://www.redmercosur.org/>

2. Aim of the workshop:

This workshop will provide insight information on the Mercosur region (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and enable an informal dialogue among experts from the region and Canadian MPs.

3. Trainers:

Andrés López (Executive Director, Red Mercosur, CENIT-Argentina)
Fernando Masi (CADEP – Paraguay)
Cecilia Alemany (Coordinator, Red Mercosur)

4. Participants:

MPs, advisors, civil society, etc.

5. Duration and tentative date

2 hours, on May 26, 2010.

6. Expected results: MPs will have a more in depth understanding of current development, trade and social dynamics in South America, with particular emphasis on the Mercosur process.

7. Draft agenda:

Inclusive growth and social dimension of Mercosur

By Fernando Masi

The evolution of Foreign direct investment, intra-regional and extra-regional trade flows in Mercosur

By Andrés López

Mercosur 2010: what are the key areas of the regional agenda?

By Cecilia Alemany

Informal debate