

April 29, 2008

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
of the United States of America  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Madam Speaker:

Since the reestablishment of democracy in Latin America, the countries of our region have made great efforts to fight poverty and social inequality, create opportunities, and improve the quality of life of our peoples. Our efforts are based on a commitment to social justice, the rule of law and democratic governance. In these efforts, the United States has been our friend, our neighbor and our ally.

In the last 20 years, relations between the United States and Latin America have been strengthened by growing economic and commercial ties. Both Democratic and Republican administrations have offered a new partnership based not only on the continuation of unilateral trade preference programs but also on the goal of eventually moving forward to bilateral or regional trade schemes that would secure benefits for all.

Latin America has seen this partnership as a promising one. Heads of State in the region have embraced the idea as a positive sign that the United States is bringing the region together, trying to work with us as partners for a more prosperous common future. Furthermore, it is clear that the friendship between the United States and Latin America cannot be based exclusively on international cooperation, as important as that is, or solely on unilateral trade preference programs, which have limited scope, duration and certainty. Our countries are instead looking for new opportunities and fair treatment.

In this context, trade agreements are an important tool for fighting poverty and generating opportunities in the Hemisphere. Chile, with the most open economy in Latin America, has signed free trade agreements with many countries around the world and has managed to reduce poverty by almost two thirds in the last 17 years. This is an example that many wish to follow, because the fewer goods that are exported by Latin American countries, the higher risk they face of exporting people through massive migration toward developed countries.

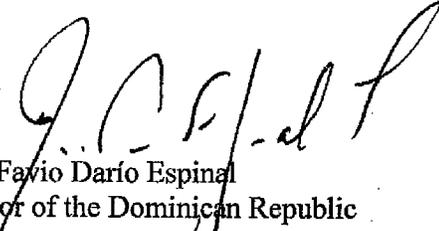
Latin America and the United States are joined by geography, culture and common values. For many years, the exchange of goods and services across borders has been a vital factor in maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship. The approval of the free trade agreement between the United States and Colombia would be another step toward deepening that relationship, toward fair and equitable integration of our nations, and most importantly, toward securing the stability and peace of the Western Hemisphere.

With deep respect, we would like to emphasize the importance of the United States Congress's approving this agreement, considering the substantial benefits not only for the people of Colombia but also for the people of the United States and, ultimately, for the whole region.

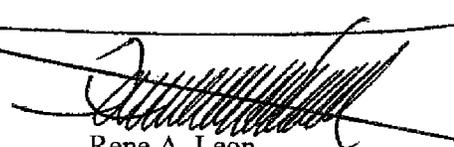
We express our highest and most distinguished consideration to you and commend you for your work in forging a stronger relationship among all our nations.



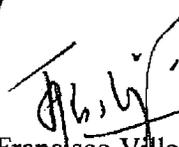
F. Tomás Dueñas  
Ambassador of Costa Rica



Favio Darío Espinal  
Ambassador of the Dominican Republic



Rene A. Leon  
Ambassador of El Salvador



Francisco Villagrán  
Ambassador of Guatemala



Roberto Flores Bermúdez  
Ambassador of Honduras