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**Secretary-General of Organization of American States
and UNIDO Director-General sign agreement**

Vienna, Austria, 18 October, 2005



Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza and UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) at UNIDO's headquarters in Vienna on 18 October. The MOU establishes a framework for cooperation between the two organizations under which the OAS can associate itself with [UNIDO ongoing projects in Latin America](#) and work together with UNIDO in the development of joint programmes, projects or activities. Five areas of collaboration are specified in the MoU: Investment and Technology Promotion; Industrial Competitiveness and Trade; Private Sector Development; Sustainable Energy and Environment; and Security, Human Rights and Development.

l to r: UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños and Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza at UNIDO HQ. ([view larger picture here](#))

[José Miguel Insulza](#) is just beginning a five year term as OAS Secretary General, having taken office on May 26, 2005. The 62-year-old Chilean was Minister of the Interior and Vice President of the Republic immediately prior to that. When he left that post in May 2005, he had served as a government minister for more than a decade, the longest continuous tenure for a minister in Chilean history. UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños will step down as Chief Executive of UNIDO on 8 December 2005, after completing two four year terms.

The [Organization of American States](#) is the region's premier forum for multilateral dialogue and concerted action. All [35 independent countries of the Americas](#) have ratified the [OAS Charter](#) and belong to the Organization. Cuba remains a member, but its government has been excluded from participation in the OAS since 1962. At the core of the OAS mission is a commitment to democracy, as expressed in the [Inter-American Democratic Charter](#): "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it." Building on this foundation, the OAS works to promote good governance, strengthen human rights, foster peace and security, expand trade, and address the complex problems caused by poverty, drugs and corruption.

The OAS member states have intensified their cooperation since the end of the Cold War. In 1994 the region's 34 democratically elected presidents and prime ministers met in Miami for the First Summit of the Americas, where they established broad political, economic and social development goals. They have continued to meet periodically since then to examine common interests and priorities. Through the ongoing [Summits of the Americas process](#), the region's leaders have entrusted the OAS with a growing number of responsibilities to help advance the countries' shared vision.

For the past several years, the OAS has worked alongside the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to support the creation of the [Free Trade Area of the Americas](#) (FTAA). The Third Summit of the Americas in 2001 set a target date of January 2005 for completing FTAA negotiations, but these negotiations have not yet concluded. OAS member states nonetheless remain committed to the idea of economic integration and the benefits it can bring to their countries. At the [Special Summit of the Americas](#), held in January 2004, the hemisphere's leaders recognized "the important role that trade plays in promoting sustained growth and economic development" and reaffirmed the importance of promoting better access to markets to benefit all economies, part of the Doha Development Agenda.

The OAS provides various types of support to small countries, including training programs to help officials engage more effectively in trade negotiations. The OAS also assists countries in preparing to implement their obligations under negotiated trade agreements. The type of assistance varies depending on the needs of each country, but may include holding workshops for customs officials, helping the government gather better trade data or analyzing trade-related laws in effect. The OAS also helps member states adjust to the challenges of economic integration and find ways to better reap the benefits of free trade.

The areas of collaboration and ongoing UNIDO projects in Latin America specified under the UNIDO-OAS MoU fit well to the [Hemispheric Cooperation Programme](#) adopted as part of the FTAA process. Under the Hemispheric Cooperation Programme, OAS member states have developed national trade capacity-building strategies to identify their needs and priorities in the trade area. These comprehensive studies involved consultation with government officials, business leaders, civil society representatives and other stakeholders in the process. Based on the needs identified, the countries may ask the OAS and other international and regional organizations as well as national governments for assistance. Besides providing direct capacity-building assistance, the OAS coordinates with other donors to respond to countries' requests. Improving the competitive capacity of micro, small and medium-sized businesses in order to reap the benefits of trade liberalization and more open markets is considered to "constitute a fundamental component for economic growth, employment creation, and poverty reduction in our countries".

MORE INFO ► Ricardo Massot, Tel: +43 1 26026 / 3432 E-mail: R.Massot@unido.org

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