

Transcript of Joint Media Roundtable  
with Acting Secretary Chuck Conner and  
U.S. Trade Representative Ambassador Susan Schwab  
Regarding the Colombia Free Trade Agreement  
Washington D.C.  
November 5, 2007

**SEC. CHUCK CONNER:** I first want to welcome Ambassador Sue Schwab to the Department of Agriculture. She is no stranger to this agency, and we work so closely on many trade issues, and certainly all of the agricultural trade issues. I'll start us off, if I could, Ambassador Schwab, with just some short comments about our trip, and then I'm going to turn it over to her, because you guys know that Sue is the President's point person in terms of passing of the Free Trade Agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, as well as South Korea.

Specifically today we're going to talk to you a little bit about Colombia. Sue and I had the pleasure of leading a congressional delegation over the last three days to Colombia, seven members of Congress, and we had an opportunity to see a variety of activity going on in Colombia. Those activities we believe really represent very, very substantial progress on the part of the people of Colombia, the government of Colombia, to really move their economy forward, move their democracy forward in terms of not only economic stability but safety for their citizens, job opportunities where none had previously existed, a safe harbor in terms of labor activities and in terms of the ability of labor unions to function without threat within that country.

I'll just start again very quickly by saying, the first part of our trip we went to Medellin, and this is a very large city in Colombia, a city that has changed dramatically over the last 10 years as they have seen very large amounts of their population move if you will into the city unit, the original city of Medellin is in a relatively small valley, fairly concentrated, tremendous roads of the city go sort of up the mountainside, if you will, and you literally can see firsthand these dwellings hanging along the cliff going on into the city. And these were all people that have migrated in from the rural areas for various reasons, some for economic opportunity, some for safe harbor away from the violence that was going on. It's, again, a city that has changed very rapidly. These areas of growth in the city, for the past many years prior, have been the subject of tremendous violence. I saw firsthand what the government of Colombia as well as the mayor of Medellin is doing in terms of breaking down that violence and providing opportunity for people living up in the mountainside to literally come down into the city and work and move about without fear of threat to their life in any way.

We actually rode on the metro cable which is almost like a gondola going up the side of the mountain. You feel like you ought to be skiing as you move up this thing. But this is their metro system for moving people to and from these regions, one of the things that has resulted in a remarkable change in that city is people, giving them the ability to move

around and to actually break down the barriers that have historically been controlled by the paramilitaries within that region. It's fascinating stuff, very vibrant mayor there that is leading this charge, and we were excited again to see that firsthand, to talk to some of the people about how they have come to this area, how they may have been involved in paramilitary type activities in the past and put down their arms. They are now working with the leadership, the president of the country and others, to get training so they can go on to, not a life of killing but, simply a life of productivity where they have jobs, raise their family, pay taxes, have medical benefits, Social Security type benefits, all those kinds of things. We take them for granted. They are a tremendous move forward in this country.

We did also in the outskirts of Medellin visit a cut flower farm. It was a fascinating farm, beautiful if you could imagine a farm simply covered with flowers. It was a beautiful, beautiful operation. I took note though that 80 percent of those cut flowers from that particular farm we were on are exported to the United States for our cut flower industry here. It again showed for us the importance of trade. On that particular farm we got a chance to interview some of their employees, and in this case the vast majority of their employees were women. These were women that really had been caught in the crossfire of the violence in Colombia from a variety of different sources. They were able to get away from that violence, found jobs in the cut flower industry as a result of the training that the local government and federal government were providing down there, training to do this job. Now they've gone from literally in some cases living on the streets out of fear of their lives because they couldn't go home, to having a job, providing for their family, receiving benefits as a result of that job in the form of retirement, healthcare, these kinds of things. Very, very exciting.

Let me just say, I was really impressed by the progress overall, whether it was the cut flower business or the economy in general. Colombia had a GDP growth of 6.8 percent in 2006 and they are actually expecting that number to grow for 2007. This is an economy that is growing, providing jobs for those people. Those jobs are replacing illicit activities, paramilitary type activities that have been dominant in the past. It's really a country that has moved forward, unemployment down considerably, the poverty rates in these countries down very, very considerably again as a result of economic growth and opportunities for business that are being provided down there by the President and by the local leadership within Colombia.

I'll just close and mention that we also obviously talked a great deal about our own agricultural economy, the importance that Colombia represents to us in terms of future potential agricultural markets for us. It's really a great fit, Colombia and the U.S., in terms of agricultural trade. They have the ability to grow their economy through their agricultural production – vast, vast majority of that agricultural production is in the form of products that we don't produce here in the United States, products like bananas, coffee, cut flowers, all the kinds of the things that we will import a significant quantity of from somewhere simply because we don't grow any in most cases, not a lot in other cases, of that particular product.

But they also have tremendous demand for our agricultural goods. I think you guys know, and Sue has underscored substantially that in order for that growth in our own agricultural exports to occur, we really need duties on our products going into Colombia to come down. Their duties are already very low and in most cases zero coming into the U.S. Our duties remain very, very high going into Colombia. The Free Trade Agreement will end that situation; 50 percent of our agricultural goods would enter duty-free immediately. The remainder of those products would be phased out rapidly over that 10 to 15-year period. We think easily another \$400 to \$500 million worth of agricultural exports as a result of the decline in duties. It's a great fit for a country that is on the move that really does represent, we believe and saw firsthand for ourselves, a country that is committed to democracy, committed to its people, committed to the safety of its people.

So we're excited. We came back, and again Sue and I as if we weren't already committed before, we are fully committed to seeing this Colombia Free Trade Agreement happen. So Sue, please.

**AMBASSADOR SCHWAB:** Thank you, Mr. Secretary. It was indeed a very useful trip. We had seven members with us, three senators – Senators Lincoln and Cantwell and Graham, and Congressmen Goodlatte, Tanner, Wicker and Cardoza. So we had four House members. You all can go back and look. They have mixed records in terms of how they voted on trade in the past, and I think if you ask them I think they'd agree it was a very, very useful visit.

There's a lot of information out there, a lot of misinformation out there about Colombia. Many of us, many politicians, many in the media are trapped in a perception of Colombia that is 5, 10, 15, 20 years old and out of date. I had been to Colombia a number of times, but not recently, and I'll tell you that from my own perspective the transformation between then and now is almost incalculable. You would not have moved two feet in Bogotá without armed security when I was there in '91 at the height of the power and control of the drug cartels. And as a U.S. government official, you would never have even considered going to Medellin.

We had good visits in both cases. We had meetings, a long meeting with President Uribe, and actually we had a large group briefing with President Uribe, and then the members basically went off and had a much more low key, intimate conversation. We met as Chuck said with the mayor of Medellin. The trade minister was there, their ambassador and our ambassador. Ambassador Barco, many of you have met her, their defense minister. We spent time with union leaders who are for the FTA, union leaders who are against the FTA, spent time with demobilized paramilitaries, and as the Secretary mentioned quite a number of displaced workers.

The progress that Colombia has made I refer to as "incalculable." In fact it is calculable. Is that a real word? It is measurable. Thank you, Sean. It is measurable on a variety of scales, dramatic decrease in murders, dramatic decrease in kidnappings, dramatic decrease in terrorist incidents, terrorist attacks. So the question for those of us more

focused on the trade and agriculture side of the equation is, how does this free trade agreement fit into the many incredible things they have accomplished in Colombia.

I think the most profound observation I came away with was the interconnectedness. After seeing the dramatic change, the difference of night and day between what it was and what it is now, is the interconnectedness of that which is traditionally foreign policy, meaning U.S. geostrategic interests in a region where we see different governments going in different directions. You see the government, leadership of Peru, government leadership in Colombia embracing free markets, democracy, rule of law, proAmerican stance – Chile obviously in that camp as well. You see others in the region going in a totally different direction away from democracy, away from rule of law, away from markets.

So you've got the geostrategic issues, the narcotics trafficking issues and what's been accomplished in terms of the Plan Colombia, and we also had a really impressive set of briefings about the work of Plan Colombia, the manual and airborne eradication efforts and so on. What will those individuals be doing if they are not planting coca or processing coca? Then you've got the trade agreement where currently, as Chuck said, Colombia, as is the case with Peru and Panama, currently have unilateral free trade preferences and access to the U.S. market. What these governments have chosen to do, and I'd note in the case of President Uribe we closed the Free Trade Agreement and he was then reelected by an overwhelming margin. And their legislation passed by an overwhelming margin not just the original free trade agreement, but last week they also passed the amendments to the Free Trade Agreement that arose out of the May 10 bipartisan deal on labor and environment.

I think the answer really crystallized in my mind and I suspect in the minds of some of the members who were with us, and that is it is hard to identify a single economic reason or geopolitical reason or reason related to our battle against narcotics traffickers, hard to identify a single reason to vote no on the Free Trade Agreement, whether it's on the trade front, the narcotics front, the geopolitics.

And any number of reasons to vote yes. You think about the demobilized and the displaced who we met with. What are they going to be doing? How can the United States, the government of Colombia contribute to the vibrant economic growth that the Secretary referred to and a future that is a future focused on agriculture, manufacturing, services in legal as distinct from illicit areas. I think, again for those who have said they have problems with the Colombia FTA, one, they are not giving credit for the incredible accomplishments that this government has already made. Two, they have yet to come up with a single solitary reason to explain how voting no on the Colombia FTA is somehow going to save a single individual, prevent a single murder, as distinct from very clear evidence that the promotion of trade and investment that the FTA will bring will contribute to furthering these objectives.

I'm going to stop there and open up. Comments, questions? Actually I guess its questions.

Let me mention one other thing, by the way. I should have mentioned this earlier because as we approach the vote on the Peru FTA, which as you all know is now scheduled to take place in the House on Wednesday, that will increasingly turn the focus on the remaining Free Trade Agreements. Clearly, assuming the vote on the bill clears the House, it's going to have to clear the Senate, and subsequently we'll be focused on the Colombia, Panama and Korea FTAs. I think it's extremely important that the show of bipartisan support for the Peru FTA be sustained this week and the coming weeks. The 39 to zero vote in the Ways and Means Committee, the 20 to 1 vote in the Senate Finance Committee really show a strong return to a bipartisan trade agenda, and we hope to see that sustained, reinforced on the floor of the House and in the Senate, and then ultimately sustained with the Colombia FTA and the other FTAs going forward.

I'll stop there.

**SEC. CONNER:** We'll take some of your questions. Yes.

**REPORTER:** Mary Berger with Washington Trade Daily. I just wanted to see what you think the prospects are for a vote on the Colombia FTA this year. Have you pretty much ruled that out given that there's not much time left in the legislative session? Or would you still like to see some sort of action this year?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** We would obviously like to see action on the Colombia FTA as soon as possible for a variety of reasons, not the least of which it was signed over a year ago. And as you know, the preferences, the Andean preferences will expire again in February. I'd note the vote earlier this year to extend those preferences until February was a vote of 365 in favor in the House of Representatives. This is one way free trade preferences for Colombia and Peru and Ecuador, Bolivia.

So in the interest of creating a sense of stability in the Colombian economy, Vis a Vis the Free Trade Agreement and these preferences, sooner is better than later. Ultimately the decision on timing needs to be made in conjunction with the congressional leadership. So I can't say when the timing will be. I can tell you that we will look forward to working with the congressional leadership, Democrats and Republicans, to try to schedule the next set of free trade agreements as promptly as possible.

**REPORTER:** Mark Drajem from Bloomberg. (unclear) Colombia (unclear) course of the negotiations of the FTA was that U.S. corn imports have displaced many farmers down there, put them out on the street or push them into coca production. Did this come up during your visit there? Is it a concern? Is it (unclear) the agreement, and is there anything you might think about doing in terms of mitigating that potential problem?

**SEC. CONNER:** Well, Mark, let me just say that as I indicated a couple moments ago, as we have analyzed the situation this is a Free Trade Agreement really in agricultural products where I think things fit together very, very nicely in terms of our needs and

products that we cannot produce in this country versus products that they need down there as well.

We talked at great length with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, talked a brief time with the president about this and as well then with their trade minister about where they are in terms of future plans for biofuels for that country. And they have enormous plans in terms of development of a biofuel industry. They raise a lot of palm that can be converted into biodiesel. Obviously they have ideal climate for sugar cane production which they can convert into ethanol as well. Again, at the highest levels I think their view is their future agricultural needs and where you will see their acreage going in the future is for the production of these biofuels.

So again, this is a market where we believe whether you want to talk about U.S. corn or beef products, poultry, strong demand for these type of things, for their flowers coming up here, coffee, bananas, all these kinds of – it's a great fit, very, very complimentary, not in any way I think going to represent major competition for one sector over the other. So I just see it being a very win/win situation for both countries.

**AMB. SCHWAB:** I want to add, I agree entirely with what the Secretary said, and I'd add to that that in the case of those few agricultural commodities where the Colombian government had particular concerns, there are long transitions built into the FTA that permit the evolution that Chuck is describing.

**REPORTER:** Doug Palmer with Reuters. I just wondered, in terms of your discussion with Congress, do you see any linkage between consideration of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement and what's ultimately decided in terms of trade adjustment assistance? I know the Administration has threatened to veto the House bill as it currently stands, and I'm not sure the Senate Finance, Senator Baucus' bill is greatly different than what the House has come up with. Is there a negotiation going on here in terms of we'll give you what you want on TAA if you give us some sort of commitment to vote on these free trade agreements?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** Unlike in the past where TAA legislation was embedded in a larger piece of trade legislation, trade liberalizing legislation, that's clearly not going on now. And we've got four free trade agreements that are moving each on their own path, and we've got TAA moving on its path. Since all these pieces of legislation involve many of the same characters, no doubt there will be – I was going to say cross fertilization but it's the wrong word. No doubt, it's the same cast of characters, so no doubt there's going to be a lot of conversation back and forth. I think the key in terms of Trade Adjustment Assistance is that the Administration is already very much on record favoring, and the President personally on record favoring an extension and improvement of Trade Adjustment Assistance.

So the question then becomes, what kind of trade, of extension, of improvements, and can we have a meeting of minds? I think we are pledged to work with the Congress to try to achieve that meeting of minds. And to the extent that Trade Adjustment Assistance helps

to alleviate some of the concerns out there, that would be terrific. But these free trade agreements really can and do stand on their own merits in terms of the economic impact, the benefits to American workers, to almost 20,000 American businesses, mostly small and medium-sized businesses, that trade with Peru and Colombia and Panama.

**SEC. CONNER:** Before you ask your question, if I could apologize, and Sue knows this as well, I do have to leave here very shortly because I've got a meeting at the White House that you're never late for. But I have been thinking about how I can illustrate for you maybe one picture that describes the changes that have occurred in Colombia from what perhaps I will tell you before the trip was even my wife's perception of the way Colombia has been and her concern for us going down there, but what we really saw.

Here's the picture I will paint for you. When we saw President Uribe who is a remarkable visionary man, just a strong, strong leader, with our congressional delegation, he gave us a brief tour of the residence, their White House if you will. As part of that tour, he literally took us into the diplomatic receiving room, and we walked out on a balcony there outside the diplomatic receiving room. Just to paint the stage, understand this is a man who has multiple attempts on his life, a man who during his first inauguration for President walked out into the inauguration area and was met with rocket launched grenades that killed 17 people and injured over 30 people. So this is the background.

Here's this guy, he walks out on this balcony looking out over a public street and literally there's a person out there standing on the street and the president of the country in Colombia waves to him and yells out, "Buenos Dias." Now that's the type of change that has occurred in this country, remarkable, remarkable change. And that's obviously just a small part of what we saw, but it demonstrates that this is a very, very different place. This is a very strategic ally and friend of the United States that is making great progress.

**AMB. SCHWAB:** His inauguration by the way was in 2002, five years ago.

**SEC. CONNER:** So I apologize for that. Let's go to your question. If I sneak out, Sue is going to take a few more questions, but I do have to make sure I'm not late for my next meeting.

**REPORTER:** (unclear) with DPA. If the reports are right, you said in Colombia, Ms. Schwab, that you plan to extend the preferences. And my question is when are you planning to bring it to Congress and if you are confident that it will be approved?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** As I recall when we did the press conference yesterday in Bogotá, I was asked about the preferences, and we met with the business community as well (unclear) about the country. And what I said at that time was, we would expect the preferences to be extended regardless of when the vote is on the Colombia FTA, and that they'd need to be extended because even after the vote on the Free Trade Agreement there will be a period of time between the vote and the entering into force of the Free Trade Agreement where both sides need to make changes in our domestic regulations to

conform to our commitment under the FTA. So even if there were a vote on the Colombia FTA yesterday, we would still not likely be ready by February 2008.

The timing of that extension is one we will be able, working on with congressional leadership, and we have every indication from the congressional leadership because they recognize that these preferences need to be extended, that a gap in the preferences will create serious dislocations. And so we will be working over the next several weeks and months on the extension, but I can't tell you when exactly that will take place. Obviously the lead there is with the congressional leadership. But we have every reason to believe the congressional leadership will take this very seriously and as I noted earlier this year the preferences were extended there were 365 yes votes.

**REPORTER:** Erik Wasson, Inside U.S. Trade. Last week Chairman Rangel put the onus on the Administration to find votes for Colombia and Korea, saying he doesn't support, there's simply not the votes for it. What is your strategy going forward? We've heard some people say Colombia needs to produce a new labor program or something. Is that in the works at all? Do the Democrats need to have something to point to that Colombia is improving the violence situation. Thank you.

**AMB. SCHWAB:** I'm going to give you a couple general responses. It is incumbent upon any individual, business, member of Congress, and the Administration that believes that the Colombia FTA is in our national interest, whether it is our economic commercial interest, our interest in terms of fighting narco-trafficking, or our geopolitical, geostrategic interests to be educating our colleagues and counterparts to be talking up the Colombia FTA.

So to begin with, the first item on the agenda is an education process, is in many ways what I was describing about the perception of Colombia that has not caught up to the reality of Colombia and does not give credit for all the incredible transformations that have taken place in that country. So that's the first thing.

How does one go about doing that? Talking it up, giving speeches, doing press conferences. Two, encouraging members of Congress to go to Colombia and see for themselves whether they come with one of us in the Administration, Secretary Gutierrez has taken two groups, I went this time, Secretary Paulson's going to be going, Secretary Gutierrez is going back, I may well go back. And we cast a very wide net on the Hill for anyone who is interested in going, whether they are for the FTA, uncertain, against the FTA, they are welcome to join us if they are willing to give up a weekend and go down there. So yeah, I'm encouraging individuals to see for themselves, judge for themselves, talk to people down there themselves, take the time to focus on this very complex issue and not accept information that's filtered through individuals and groups with a political agenda that has nothing to do with the FTA. So that's two.

Three, there is a lot of data out there to reinforce and provide evidence of the progress that's been made. You've heard Administration officials quote statistics on the decline in murders, in kidnappings, in terrorist attacks, in cocaine production, all these things. A lot



of what we need to be doing is gathering that data and providing it to interested individuals and also encouraging third party validation to do the same thing. So that's the information, the data side of it.

Finally, the Colombian government and President Uribe and others are the first to recognize and acknowledge that they still have real challenges ahead. They also make a very compelling case for why the free trade agreement will contribute to the cure, but they recognize, they acknowledge they have serious challenges ahead and are continuing to do things and are willing to do more to help alleviate that.

You look at the dramatic up tick in funding for the independent judiciary and the prosecutors so that they hope to see a further increase in convictions. They've had a dramatic increase already in the number of convictions in some of the unsolved murder cases, but there are still others that are unsolved. So that kind of thing, stepping up and continuing on that path. But what makes the stepping up so credible is their track record up to this point.

**REPORTER:** Gary Yerkey with BNA. I wonder if you could expand on the third party validation issue a little bit. That's an idea that's been around awhile. I'm just wondering how far along you are or in discussions perhaps with the Colombians or who would do it. Are we talking ILO?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** There are a number of potential – I'd say on that one, stay tuned, and we will have more to say on that next week. You're talking about specific examples already out there, that's true. Barry McCaffrey who as you know was the Clinton Administration's Drug Czar, and arguably was the father of Plan Colombia, just went back to Colombia a couple weeks ago and came back and I believe testified about what he found and the contrast between then and now. So he has a paper that he's put together, and we ought to find out whether that's public and we've been sharing it with folks on the Hill, but it may be public, so we should – let's ask him.

That's an example. We have talked to a number of groups about providing data that they have or have collected, and there are a variety of options out there in terms of third party validation, and some of it is a matter of just tracking it and sharing it.

**REPORTER:** I just am trying to – what is it that you want the Democratic leaders to do? Because you make these arguments and it doesn't seem to have any impact, or maybe you're seeing impact behind the scenes that I'm not seeing, but it doesn't seem like they've changed their position since June 29<sup>th</sup> on the issue. So do you want them just to agree to have a vote on the agreement, or do you want them to endorse the pact? I'm just confused about the way forward.

**AMB. SCHWAB:** Well, let me offer the following thoughts. There are significant numbers of Democrats who have said to us that they understand how important the Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement is, both for the United States and for Colombia. Some of them see it as important for trade reasons, some see it as important for

geostrategic reasons, some because of their concerns about drug problems in our inner cities.

There's tremendous pressure on those individuals to fall into line with groups that oppose the Colombia FTA or oppose Uribe, or for whatever reason generally not related to trade don't want to see this agreement go into effect. And so first of all, having a vote and knowing there's going to be a vote will require individuals to search their consciences about what is the right thing to do. It will also focus attention on what's happened in Colombia.

So first we want to see a vote, we know there's going to be a vote, we want that vote to be scheduled in conjunction with the leadership. That's the way it should work, bipartisan trade policy. If you go back to the June 29 release, it acknowledges that there is not a trade issue with the Colombia agreement. But the labor and environment issues that were addressed in the May 10 agreement narrow the issues of concern to the violence and impunity issue. You go back and take a look at that because the May 10 agreement basically took off the table the labor and environment issues.

So then the question is, how to address the concerns, legitimate concerns by the way and I don't pretend otherwise, about violence and impunity. Well, one is to get better and more updated information about the situation as regards violence and impunity. We're talking about third party validation, talking visiting, people seeing for themselves, all the things I'm describing, giving members the opportunity to judge for themselves on the basis of facts rather than perceptions, and on the basis of accurate facts rather than misinformation.

Then the second part of that equation is, those things that the Colombian government is prepared to undertake going forward such as the kind of money they are putting into adding prosecutors and so on that might also contribute to the comfort level of individuals who want to vote yes or persuade others to vote yes.

I think as long as the prospect of a Colombia FTA vote is kind of out there, nebulous, you're not going to see a lot of people taking public stances because there's a lot of pressure on them not to.

**REPORTER:** Do you have a date in mind?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** Sooner is better than later. It's possible after Peru is done. But the most important answer to that question would be a near term date that we could work out with the congressional leadership. I think it's very important this be done in conjunction what the congressional leadership if at all possible.

Mark.

**REPORTER:** You mentioned that for Peru you want to see (unclear) bipartisanship. What does that mean in terms of vote count from Democrats? Do you want the majority

of the Democrats to vote for this agreement?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** You don't actually think I'm going to answer that question, do you? No. Here's what I don't talk about. I don't talk about currency, I don't talk about when the Doha Round is going to succeed, and I don't handicap votes. I don't handicap votes on trade bills.

**REPORTER:** -- what you would like (unclear)?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** I want to see a strong bipartisan vote in favor of the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. I want to see it pass. I want to see a strong endorsement, a strong signal that the bipartisan agreement that we reached in May means something. And you know what, Mark? We've seen that already. Look at the votes in Ways and Means and Finance. I can't tell you what the Ways and Means and Finance votes have been on previous FTAs, but I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a 39 to zero in Ways and Means or a 20 to 1 in Finance. One more question.

**REPORTER:** My question is if you are confident that the preferences are going to be extended also for Bolivia and Ecuador.

**AMB. SCHWAB:** I'm not confident. It obviously will be one of the questions under discussion and debate about the preference extension. That is not to say they won't be extended, but it is going to be one of the issues, the timing of when the extension takes place, how long the extension will be for, and which countries would be covered under what circumstances would obviously all be issues that the Administration and Congress will need to take a position on. So I can't answer the question, but it's likely to be an issue obviously.

What is the meaning, the purpose of trade preferences?

**REPORTER:** -- over an extension of ATPA as a good opportunity for the congressional leadership to say they would hold a vote on Colombia? You're going to be having conversations with them over the extension --

**AMB. SCHWAB:** Oh, possibly. That's almost too, makes almost too much sense. No, I don't -- possibly. Possibly, yeah. But the reason I hesitate is because the trade preferences will have to be extended regardless, but certainly having a decision earlier, sooner rather than later on the timing of the next set of FTA votes will have a bearing on how long you would expect to need to extend those preferences.

**REPORTER:** I just wanted to clarify, go back to the two questions Mark and Doug are asking. Are you saying that Bush's endorsement of a revised TAA is not in any way moving to a strong bipartisan support of the Free Trade Agreement?

**AMB. SCHWAB:** I mean everything is linked to everything in this town, right? I mean everything is linked to everything. No, I just reiterate the point I made which is we have

in front of us decisions that need to be taken related to the three remaining trade agreements, actually four if you include the Senate decision on when to take the Peru vote, but obviously that's time bound now because of TPA. So the three remaining FTAs, the trade preference extension, trade adjustment assistance, and perhaps even trade promotion authority if we can get a breakthrough in the Doha Round. I mean it's all, it's the same cast of characters, and many of us really want the same thing which is to move forward a trade agenda that garners the maximum possible support from the American people.

Thank you.