

**Press Conference by  
U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick and  
Dominican Republic Secretary for Commerce and Industry Sonia Guzman  
in Washington, DC  
Monday, March 15, 2004**

**Zoellick:** I'm delighted to be here with Sonia Guzman, the Secretary for Commerce and Industry of the Dominican Republic, to announce that we have completed our negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Dominican Republic. As I think all of you know, we have been working to integrate the Dominican Republic into the Central American Free Trade Agreement, or CAFTA, while, of course, customizing the terms of opening markets for goods and agriculture, services, investment, and government procurement. So today's historic step enables the Dominican Republic to join the CAFTA. It also sends a strong signal of U.S. commitment to the Caribbean, since the Dominican Republic is the largest economy in the Caribbean.

And we're delighted to be maintaining the momentum of the United States in opening markets for workers, businesses and farmers. In the past three months, a number of you have been with us in this room and you know that we've completed free trade agreements with eight countries around the world: Australia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Morocco and now the Dominican Republic.

I want to in particular thank Regina Vargo who has done such tremendous work on a number of those countries on the list. Also, Al Johnson, our Chief Ag Negotiator who actually went down to the Dominican Republic just about a week ago to have some special consultations since agriculture is always important but sensitive topic. And also Caroline Mejia who really done a fantastic job with Secretary Guzman in terms of trying to pull together the different forces and I know has been very committed to this agreement from the start so I want to thank you as well.

This combined CAFTA-Dominican Republic agreement inaugurates free trade with a very significant, but also growing market for the United States. U.S. trade with the Dominican Republic already represents almost \$9 billion dollars of trade and total trade with the five Central American members of CAFTA plus the Dominican Republic amounts to about \$32 billion dollars and together that makes this the second largest market in Latin America, after Mexico.

Under the terms we've just negotiated, 80 percent of U.S. consumer and industrial goods will enter the Dominican Republic duty-free on day one. And we envision new opportunities for American exporters of information technology products, agriculture and construction equipment, wood, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and medical and scientific equipment. And of course Dominican producers and consumers will enjoy lower cost inputs and lower prices.

More than half of the current U.S. farm exports to the Dominican Republic will become duty-free immediately. So America's farmers and ranchers will see new opportunities in sectors such as meat, and corn, and soybeans, rice, dairy, fruits and vegetables, among others. And this means

the U.S. farmers and ranchers will have access to the Dominican Republic, that is better than that from suppliers in Canada, the European Union and Latin America.

This agreement also helps textile and apparel industries in both countries to compete with others around the world in particular China. Many people are unaware of the fact that the Dominican Republic is already a key export market for US yarn and fiber, accounting for some \$1.7 billion of yarn and fiber exports last year. And indeed 83% of the Dominican Republic's textile exports use U.S. yarn and fabric

This agreement will also strengthen the special economic ties that exist between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. These two already have the largest bilateral trading relationship in the Caribbean, it already amounts to some \$1.3 billion in 2-way commerce. So when the Puerto Rican, the governor of Puerto Rico was here not too many months ago, she very much stressed her interest in moving forward this free trade agreement.

As I think a number of you know I had a chance to visit Santo Domingo, some two months ago, to speak personally with President Mejia, members of his cabinet, members of the legislature, representatives of civil society, and other groups to try to make sure, as we moved into this key phase that the negotiations were on track. And I just want to say that it's a tribute in my view to President Mejia's commitment and to Secretary Guzman's skill, that these negotiations have concluded with a state-of-the-art addition to CAFTA. We all know the Dominican Republic had a hard financial patch recently after a very strong period of growth during the 90's. So it's not an easy process, but their leadership and commitment to making sure the Dominican Republic had an even stronger trade relationship with the United States, is what brought us here today.

When I talked with President Mejia's some two years ago and we started at that time with the Central American countries, he wanted to make sure the Dominican Republic could advance in free trade in conjunction with the Central American economies and that's what he and secretary Guzman have succeeded in doing.

The completion of this agreement also greatly enhances the vision for the region, that has been put forward by President Bush. It brings to the Dominican Republic expanded economic freedom and opportunity, will help support regional stability, democracy and economic development through closer ties for commerce, culture, investment and friendship.

The expanded CAFTA will also solidify the extensive benefits that the Dominican Republic currently enjoys under the Caribbean Basin Initiative. While also creating new opportunities to sell into the largest market in the world. As with the Central American economies, we will provide virtually all of the Dominican Republic's exports – both industrial and agricultural – with immediate duty-free access to the United States.

In joining CAFTA as an inaugural partner, the Dominican Republic has also agreed to the disciplines of CAFTA. That means high standards -- in areas such as Intellectual Property Rights, services, transparency, labor and environmental standards -- these become the world economy's "good housekeeping seal" of approval. And we hope that potential investors will transform the agreement into a foundation for hope, and opportunity.

In all categories of intellectual property rights (IPR), the agreement provides state-of-the-art protections and non-discriminatory treatment for digital products such as U.S. software, music, text, videos, and it contains strong protections for U.S. patents, trademarks and trade secrets. Several of the provisions, in fact, improve on our recent free trade agreement with Chile, such as strong patent protection for certain modified plant varieties. And the Dominican Republic has also renewed its commitment to fight broadcast piracy.

This agreement makes labor obligations part of the core text, and goes beyond the Chile agreement by creating a three-part strategy on worker rights that will first, ensure effective enforcement of domestic labor laws; second, establish a co-operative program to improve those labor laws where necessary; and third, build the capacity of the Dominican Republic to monitor and enforce labor rights.

Now since this FTA includes a commitment to enforce our respective labor laws, it is useful, I think to look at some of the summary points on the Dominican Republic labor laws from a recent report of the International Labor Organization. As many of you know this has become a very timely topic and people have said they want to be concerned that countries labor laws meet the ILO's standards. So this what the ILO has to say, about the Dominican Republic's labor laws:

1<sup>st</sup>, "The Constitution of the Republic states that joining a trade union is a matter of free choice."

2<sup>nd</sup>, "National legislation recognizes the right to collective bargaining, which is granted to trade union organizations."

3<sup>rd</sup>, "The right to strike is recognized under national law."

4<sup>th</sup>, "The principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination are embodied in the Constitution itself...."

5<sup>th</sup>, “An employer who employs minors is required to provide facilities that are appropriate and consistent with the needs of the worker to allow him or her to keep up with school work and attend vocational training schools... [ And that’s on top of a minimum age for employment.]”

And 6<sup>th</sup>, “According to the Constitution... ‘any individual is free to devote himself or herself to any occupation, craft, industry or trade allowed by law’ and that consequently ‘no one may prevent others from working or force them to work against their will.’”

The Dominican Republic has also accepted the CAFTA environmental provisions, which built on our recent FTA with Chile by adding a special citizens’ petition process that we developed with Senator Baucus.

This agreement also increases transparency – which is key to economic growth. It contains strong anti-bribery commitments, transparency in custom’s administration, and public access to dispute settlement processes, including third party submissions.

Now, in a time of turmoil for the Dominican Republic's close neighbor, Haiti, this agreement will also bring a badly needed economic boost. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are linked obviously geographically, but also economically. Improved economic growth and opportunity in the Dominican Republic will benefit both countries. And we, in the final stages of this process, discussed with Congress our ability to work closely with them as the agreement goes ahead to assure that the integration, that currently exists between the Dominican and Haitian textile industries can continue to thrive through the Caribbean Basin Trade Preference Act and contribute to an integrated regional market to which American workers and businesses can participate.

Now trade agreements require conviction and commitment by both the President and the US Congress, so we very much appreciate the support that we've had from Chairman Thomas and Chairman Grassley, who have backed our efforts to expand the CAFTA to include the Dominican Republic.

I also want to thank Congressman Charlie Rangel from New York and Governor Bush of Florida who were two of the leading political figures who encouraged us to take this step to integrate the Dominican Republic into CAFTA. There are millions of Dominicans that live in New York, New Jersey, and Florida, and other states that are welcoming a new tie of opportunity between their homeland and their new home. It turns out the Dominican Republic is Florida's second largest trading partner. So we hope that others will help us get the word out about the benefits of this Free Trade Agreement to both countries.



I also want to single out Congressman Jerry Weller of Illinois, because he took the time to join with me when I visited Santa Domingo recently to convey a very important message and he was in almost all of my meetings. And that was the United States is not only committed at the presidential level to the Dominican Republic, but also on the part of the US Congress. And given the fact that, Congressman Weller is not only on the Ways and Means Committee, the key trade committee, but also the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of International Relations, it was wonderful to have him as a partner and that's what I come to expect from members of Illinois. (Laughter)

To conclude, this agreement is very important to us because it builds a stronger relationship with, what has already been a long-time and very important partner. But I think it also serves a larger aim. Together, the United States and the Dominican Republic can show many others whether in the Caribbean, in Latin America or around the world, the power of free trade to support democracy, to promote prosperity, and build a more tolerant, stable and peaceful world. Thank you.

**Secretary Guzman:** As head of the delegation that negotiated this treaty, it's very significant on this moment, that is so important that we have finally finished with a long road and we have also strengthened the traditional ties of commerce, as Ambassador Zoellick said, between two countries who have traditionally been friends, partners, and who have given one another a great

deal of support. I think that I must first before I continue, also infinitely thank Ambassador Zoellick, who has been so receptive, in this road of the negotiations and to Regina Vargo who has been a counterpart, who has enriched my life so greatly. I think we've learned a lot from Regina. Carolina Mejia, who has been an extraordinary support as an Ambassador. She's been on our delegation constantly and she has truly been an efficient, effective and necessary support.

My negotiating team, the US team which for so many months, because I really want to clarify something here. We started to talk and analyze the possibility of adhering to this agreement since 2002, within the framework of the TIC agreement that we have the United States which is an investment and trade agreement. That is to say this team has worked very hard to get to the official negotiations, which were notified to Congress and from that point forward we had three official rounds, but we have ties that go back almost two years with this US team and it has been, I would like to repeat, a very enriching relationship for our country having achieved this agreement and having docked to the Central American agreement with the Central Americas whom we already had a free trade agreement.

It's very important the numbers that Ambassador Zoellick has given you I don't need to repeat, but for our country, aside from the fact that within the legal frame work of a free trade agreement, we consolidate those things that we had in the Caribbean Basin Initiative we've also been able to achieve additional things, which Ambassador Zoellick has already mentioned. I think for us as a country this will be a before this agreement and after this agreement because we see it not only as a country, that will help, but its going to help trade, investment, because it

opens doors to investment, but it will also, as Ambassador Zoellick said, is going to help us to be more transparent, to strengthen our labor laws and the rights of workers. It's going to open up options for consumers, options for better products, cheaper products and will also give our business people the chance to invest together not only with American companies, but Central American companies as well.

We truly would like to publicly here thank our business community who just worked so strongly and with such great affection to make sure that this happened and to our congressmen as well, because our congress was present in every moment. They use to go with us to every city that we visited. I hope that our representatives when they see this agreement will support it as I also hope for the support of the US congress. It's a good agreement I think we all win by it and we're very proud to strengthen our ties this way with the United States. Thank you very much.

**Zoellick:** Take some questions? If you could state your name and where you are from.

**Reporter:** Corey Henry, Inside US Trade. Ambassador, when you concluded negotiations with Morocco, President Bush notified his intent to sign the agreement quite quickly, within a week. I wonder if you expect a similar time line with the Dominican Republic and once he's done that, I wonder has the administration worked out exactly how this agreement will be docked into CAFTA in terms of I guess this will be very technical or I think this is the first time this type of process would be attempted, so I wonder if there's a clear sort of road map in terms of once you send these bills to congress how exactly will this work with bringing them all together?

**Zoellick:** On the first part, we're just working with our colleagues at the NSC right now to be able to give the draft notice, that the President needs to send up under trade promotion authority, and I'm always circumspect about talking about the President's calendars but I hope that we'll send up the notice very soon and I have no indication that we won't. Second is for the integration. I'm glad you asked the question, because I'm sure a lot of people wonder how this works. What we discussed last year with the Dominican Republic is working from the basic framework of the agreement that we negotiated with Central America, which obviously was very similar to the agreement that we negotiated with Chile. That means the provisions for dispute settlement and the basic approaches to liberalization in services and goods and others and then what we customized where the provisions in the five categories that I mentioned what trade specialists call the market access categories for goods, agriculture, services, investment and government procurement.

Now, we wanted to meet the high standards that we had with the Central American agreement, so as you may have noted, I said that 80% of the industrial goods, US industrial good exports are duty free on day one with the Dominican Republic that's about the same numbers as we have with the Central American countries. But we did customize arrangements. So, for example, in agriculture there's a different product profile, there are some things are a little shorter, some things are a little longer, but frankly that matches what we did with the individual Central American countries as well.

Now, as Secretary Guzman mentioned, the Dominican Republic already has a free trade agreement with the five Central American countries and in the months ahead the Dominican Republic will be discussing aspects of deepening that with the five Central American partners because one of the benefit of this process, first with the five Central Americans, and now with the Dominican Republic, is that we create deeper regional integration as well.

As for the legalities of moving forward, after we send the notice up, as you know there's a 90 day period before the President could sign an agreement. So you know count 90 days ahead, from whenever the notice goes up. And then we will work with the congressional leadership as we will on the other agreements to try to get the best sense of timing. We've got Australia, Morocco, we now have the five Central American countries and the Dominican Republic and we've got a short calendar. But so the best that we can try to do is bring forth an agreement that's got a broad based support.

You might have seen that the Farm Bureau came out in support of the Central American agreement at the end of last week, a very strong statement and when you review commodity crop by commodity crop as we need to do, I think there's a lot of benefits there. And then one of the other things that we've been encouraged about, is that there are, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, there are a number members of Congress that have expressed a particular interest in this agreement, because we have some very large Dominican populations in this countries. A number of them are in New York and New Jersey, sometimes those districts don't vote as much for trade, but we hope that we'll broaden the support in this process. But it's also other parts as I

mentioned the very strong trading relationship for Florida. So we see the Dominican Republic as strengthening the CAFTA, not only economically but also in-terms of the support.

**Zoellick:** Yes

**Reporter:** Just to clarify, though, these agreements...

**Zoellick:** I think you need to give your name.

**Reporter:** Marty Crutsinger, Associated Press. Just to clarify though, do you intend that is one single vote that Congress will make on CAFTA and the Dominican Republic or are they separate votes or how does that work?

**Zoellick:** From the start of the proceeding with the Dominican Republic when we briefed both of the key committees of jurisdiction, but also something called the Congressional Oversight Group, which was put up, created under Trade Promotion Authority, we had the idea that if we could accomplish this, that they would come up together that it be part of one unitary agreement.  
Yes?

**Reporter:** Mark Drajem of Bloomberg. Just so I'm clear on this, do you think there will be a vote on CAFTA this year, and secondly, a more broad question, the criticism that comes from the Democrats recently is that the Bush Administration and your office has been going willy-nilly

with these free trade agreements and not doing enough on the trade enforcement side. This is the eight country that signed a free trade agreement with you over the last few months, is that an adequate criticism and what's your response to that?

**Zoellick:** I was focused on the (unintelligible). The first part was what?

**Reporter:** CAFTA vote this year.

**Zoellick:** As I mentioned what we have to do on that is to work with the congressional leadership on both the House and Senate side. I had a chance to brief Majority Leader Frist a couple week ago about what I hoped we would be able to get done this year on the executive branch side, and what they'd gone through. I've had some discussions with members of Republican Leadership, and that really depends on the calendar and the support we can build for these agreements. I think that goes to your other point, you know the President has emphasized if people of the United States want to fight economic isolationism and open up opportunity for US exporters this is a wonderful way to do it. Right now under the Carribean Basin Initiative some 77%, if I recall correctly, of Central American and Dominican exports come into the United States duty free. It's a one way preference program. So this is something that expands that number about to 100%, but also moves up US numbers. So it can become, we can level the playing field for US exporters.

In-terms of enforcement, we believe we can walk and chew gum at the same time, stay tuned later this maybe you'll get some more evidence of that. But I also think that..., as I explained in my congressional testimonies, the United States has a, you know, a strong combination of trying to open markets for our exporters, but also trying to enforce agreements. On Friday we won a case with the Mexican telecommunications that was an estimated by our companies to be worth over a billion dollars since the year 2000. And with the inner connections.

The Friday before that, Secretary Veneman and I worked very closely with the Mexicans to reopen about 589 million dollars of beef under the BSE issue. So the two can work together. What leaves me to smile a little bit is that you know about four or five months ago, some of you were saying well, gee, you're not doing enough free trade agreements and now we hear people saying you're doing too many free trade agreements. So I guess it's hard to please some people.

**Zoellick:** Yes

**Reporter:** Elizabeth Becker from the New York Times.

**Zoellick:** This is one of the people that who was saying that we weren't doing enough.

**Reporter:** Thank you for the nice introduction. Secretary Guzman, please. Mr Ambassador Zoellick mentioned that there are many Dominican residence here in the United States. I was



wondering if you had, if you could comment on the lack of any inclusion in this agreement, on the question of immigration, if you had raised it, and if and why it was not included? Thank you.

**Guzman:** The immigration issue is dealt with the United States through other channels because no free trade agreement talks of immigration issues. So we as a country are dealing with the immigration issues with the agencies and with channels in the United States that have to do with that issue.

**Zoellick:** Just one other point that I talked about with the Secretary and also some Members of Congress that might be of interest, insofar as that the New York Times is also a local paper. And that is that we do want to try to use this agreement and work with financial institutions to do everything we can to lower the costs of remittances. So given the large number of population of Dominicans in this country, there are rather large sum flowing back to the Dominican Republic and other Central Americans. So we know this is a very important issue and it's one that we hope these deeper ties will allow us to work with financial institutions to support.

Yes.

**Reporter:** Keith Koffler with Congress Daily. How difficult do you think it would be this year in Congress to get a trade agreement approved with a low wage region, in a year in which outsourcing is the great focus of Congress in terms of trade.

**Zoellick:** Well if you look at the nature of this economic relationship as I mentioned, with Central America including the Dominican Republic. You already have a pretty deep series of economic ties. The, you know, the trade is over 30 billion dollars, and as I mentioned in my opening remarks, and US exports, just to give you a point of comparison with these six countries, are considerably larger than US exports to Brazil. So it's already a good trading partner.

Now why is that important? Well it means you've got a good base of business support. What do you do to build on that? Well, right now there have been a lot of barriers to American agriculture in these markets and as I said, we are very pleased the Farm Bureau came out in strong support of this agreement. When you look at some of the issues we dealt with in the service area, they really add up for companies, because for example there we dealer protection laws that limited the ability of US companies to operate. All of which goes to the point, and I highlighted the textile-apparel provisions, because a lot of people do not recognize that we have integration you've already seen between US yarn and fabric producers, and some of the apparel producers in the Dominican Republic and Central America.

And as I mentioned, I think in my testimonies last week, the real challenge after the textile quotas comes off in 2004, will be competition from China and how can we integrate together? And there are members of the US industry, that not surprisingly the yarn spinners and fabric producers that recognize that importance.

As you know in terms of wage rates, as I discussed in one of the hearings, it's not just a question of wages, it's a question of the productivity that's associated with the wages. And so the challenge really is how you try to increase growth in other regions and at the same time you have the United States grow and both have a mutual benefit. If you ask Secretary Guzman, she'll tell you, and I heard this when I talked to members of the legislature in the Dominican Republic on both, of all parties actually, that they look at the United States as being very big and powerful, so it's not a question of wages, but they say how can we compete with a big, strong United States? Here people say well how can we compete with a small Dominican Republic and Central America? And in the reality is that both sides can gain.

Now what, where does that lead us in-term of overall prospects? I've been very pleased, that I think the President's aggressive statements about opening markets and having a level playing field for the United States, seemed to have been received well last week. I think my congressional testimonies were well received, frankly, by both the Senate and the House. And so we're making the case for open markets and how it's a key component to the President's overall growth strategy, combined with taxes, and combined with obviously education and worker retraining and other elements. So we're willing to make the fight on it. And we hope that some others will be prodded by the press and others not to turn in the direction of economic isolationism. So the battle is to be joined. And what we also have to face this year is a shortened congressional calendar and under the TPA procedures wait some 90 days. But we will do our best to get these agreement through.

Is there anyone, I think Sonya told me the Dominican Republic's press, there is one. Is there anyone here from, they went back over the weekend. I'm sorry.

**Reporter:** I am the Public Relation of the Secretary. No answer. Pardon.

**Zoellick:** Oh, yes. It doesn't count when you have government press woman although there must be a system we'd like to institute here. Some one in the back.

**Reuters:** Doug Palmer with Reuter's news service. I was just looking at the USTR facts sheet, when it talks about sugar, and it says that increased access will amount to 0.12% of U.S. production. If I understand correctly, the Dominican Republic, is I think the largest sugar producer in the Carribean, maybe outside of Cuba, but it is a large quota holder, and I think it holds a larger quota than the CAFTA countries currently do. But it seems like it got a smaller increase than the CAFTA countries did. And I just wondered is that true proportionally do you get a smaller increase than the rest of the CAFTA countries and how much of a disappointment is that, that you're not going to be, you know, you're obvious not going to free trade into sugar, but you have to take a back seat to smaller producers in the region.

**Guzman:** Yes, we were one of the biggest sugar producers in the Carribean, our sugar industry has been transformed and we have actually diminished our production. We are, feel satisfied with the quota that we have and the 10 % increase that we are going to get under this agreement.

Our producers believe that with quota that we already had, plus that small increase of ten thousand tons, that we may be able to maintain the industry and be able to export to the United States as well.

**Zoellick:** One of the major sugar producers in the Dominican Republic is also one of the major sugar producers in the United States, so they've got both sides of the equation.

**Rich Mills:** I think we have time for one more question.

**Zoellick:** You want to get somebody who hasn't asked one before. Anybody else? Yes.

**Reporter:** Willie Loros, CNN Espanol. Ambassador we understood that there was a little bit of problems over Friday, during the negotiations, there was a little bit of frustration about some of the products, and the agriculture part of it, what broke it? What actually made it happen?

(Same question in Spanish to Secretary Guzman) I would like to ask you the same thing you had problems on Friday, there was a lot of frustration apparently now both the private sector and the intellectual sector are very happy what happened to change it?

**Guzman:** Well, Ambassador Zoellick and Regina can say this better than I can but in every negotiation there are always problems, there are always points where apparently you arrive at a point where you just don't think there's going to be an agreement, but the important thing is that

you need to sit down look at the problem, examine it on both sides and try to find a solution, and that is exactly what happened. And to try to find a solution where everybody wins, the United States, the Dominican Republic, the productive sector in the U.S., our productive sector, and that is exactly what happened yesterday.

**Zoellick:** On the agriculture point that you mentioned, what solved it really is the skill of Al Johnson and Regina Vargo, and Peter Allgeier, who had to go to Canada over the weekend. Because...well, let me go back a step. I was very pleased that Al could go down to the Dominican Republic about a week ago because what we learned in the Moroccan, and a couple of the other negotiations, Central America was very helpful for Al and members of his team, in this case Jason Halfmeister. They have a chance to also talk directly and explain some of the tools that we have to use with sensitive products, the tariff rate quotas, how you increase over what period of time , safeguards. We've developed some experience in doing these agreements to try to help people with their sensitivities. And I'm actually very proud. They are almost putting me out of business. They do these now and I just give minimal guidance.

But as Secretary Guzman said and when she and I talked this morning before coming over here we both made the same point. In many of these negotiations, it's really a question of problem solving, it's not a question of one side gaining and the other side losing. Both of us want to try to open up our markets. But we have political sensitivities and so we try to figure out how to handle those sensitivities so a lot of is trying to be creative so that we can go back to some of our people in some of the meats area, for example, and say well look, you know here is what the current

quota increase is, but there will be over time we'll be able to lower the tariff rate and get some additional market access.

On the other hand there is an adjustment process and part of this was complicated in the Dominican Republic because given the financial problem, some of the consumption and production numbers had dropped so you can try to use historical numbers but you have to adjust for the particular circumstances and this is where I'll conclude by pointing out that not only am I very proud of our team in being creative problem solvers to get things done, but also the Dominican team was excellent at this and frankly it started at the top. President Mejia was committed to this and he's really accomplished something for his country in my view.

**Reporter:** Well, just a quick question. This is Nestor Ikeda from the Associated Press, the Latin American division. What is next?

**Zoellick:** So the Associated Press gets two?

(Inaudible)

**Reporter:** Yes. Ambassador, what is next for the USTR in regard to Latin America. I understand that the USTR is ready to start trade negotiations with Panama and some Andean countries, too.

**Zoellick:** Under the Trade Promotion Authority, we have to give Congress notice before we actually start negotiations. So last November when we were in Miami we announced that we

were sending letters up to Congress that related to Panama and the four Andean countries. And we suggested that we would start those in the second quarter of this year that is still our plan and with the Andean countries, as we noted in the letter, we have some particular issues we need to work through.

Colombia will definitely be a part of it. Panama is separate, is moving on a separate track. Peru, we have to follow through on some investment issues. Excuse me. That are part of the requirements that exist now in the Andean Trade Preference Act and in Ecuador we are working on some labor issues in particularly, but the Ecuadorans have moved in their conversation with us to be quite serious about moving forward with the Free Trade Agreement. Anyway, Bolivia, we want to keep open the option with the government but I don't think they are quite on the same path and course so what we've tried to create here, it really relates to a number of your questions is an ongoing momentum and we've gotten some agreements to the Congress already. We're bringing another set through.

We hope to get as many as we can and go through the Congress this year and we're launching another set. Because one of the other questions that we get as well is how do these add up for overall US export profile and we pointed out, this agreement is the second largest market in Latin America for the United States so these numbers start to add up and I think, I don't know if it's in these trade facts or others, but together these markets amount to our third largest export market and sixth largest economy and frankly some of the other big markets that we would like to have free trade agreements with either don't want to have a free trade agreement negotiation like the



European Union or are unwilling to open up agricultural markets like Korea and Japan. So together the markets that are left also taking out China, these amount to about a third of our export markets and if you include the full Alco, it amounts to about half of our export markets.

So you know the President is very firmly committed to the course that he set of trying to help the American economy and the American worker and farmer by opening markets abroad, at the same time, we believe that strengthens our relations to the hemisphere. So thank you all.