

South America, while Central American nations were the least favoured, being net oil importers. The region faces certain risks in the future, including rising inflation rates and a deepening deceleration of the United States and other developed economies.

Proposals for Financing for Development Summit

Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Latin America and the Caribbean remains low, as does trade-promotion assistance. Only five of the 22 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are allocating 0.7 per cent of their GDP to financing for development, as committed in the Monterrey Consensus of 2002 during the International Conference on Financing for Development, organized by the United Nations to strengthen international cooperation.

These were topics for discussion as Latin American and Caribbean nations prepared their proposals for meeting internationally-agreed goals on financing for sustainable development, during the international seminar, "The Río Group and the International Conference on Financing for Development, Doha 2008", held in Santiago on 21 August 2008. The preparatory meeting for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008, was attended by Chilean Foreign Minister Mr. Alejandro Foxley, as well as diplomats, academics and experts from ECLAC and other multilateral agencies. Participants discussed proposals regional representatives could put forward at the Doha summit.

The seminar focused on the role of middle income countries, ODA and international trade; capital flows, innovative financial mechanisms and regional development banking; South-South cooperation and

climate change; and economic governance and follow-up mechanisms.

"Empowerment of Blind and Visually Impaired Youths" of St. Lucia is Semifinalist in Social Innovation Contest

Twenty innovative projects from twelve Latin American and Caribbean nations were selected in August as semifinalists in the 2007-2008 "Experiences in Social Innovation" contest organized by ECLAC, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. For the first time in the four-year-old contest, projects from St. Lucia, Cuba and Belize were se-



lected for the semifinalist phase.

The St. Lucian semifinalist is the initiative "Empowerment of blind and visually impaired youths", of the St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association (SLBWA). The project focuses on blind or visually impaired persons under 30, mainly from rural areas. Its work model covers several stages, from schooling to insertion in the labour market, and adopts a multiple approach: itinerant teachers in regular schools; entertainment programmes for daily and vocational activities aimed at enhancing independence; and an income generating programme through work in different projects, such as telemarketing. It also trains health and education professionals

for working with the blind and visually impaired.

When it began in 2002, the project benefited 354 people, but by 2007, the number had risen to 1,169. The SLBWA project has also raised awareness among the population and allowed for multi-institutional work between the private and public sectors.

Challenges of Sea Transport and Logistical Restrictions in Ports

The role of authorized economic operators and their impact in facilitating transportation, as well as the restrictions faced by Chilean import and export companies in port operations and internal transit, were discussed during the seminar "Integrated Logistics in Ocean Ports", organized by ECLAC and the Andrés Bello University in Chile. Participants in the Seminar, held on 22 August 2008, also reviewed the need to apply integral policies in infrastructure, transportation and logistics.

The meeting was inaugurated by ECLAC Commission Secretary Ms. Laura López and Mr. Fernando Thauby García, Dean of the Faculty of Ocean Interests and Services of the Andrés Bello University. The seminar gathered Chilean officials, port and logistics experts from the private and public sectors, and academics, and sought to draw lessons from the Chilean experience that may be applied in the entire Latin American and Caribbean region.

Logistics refers not only to the storage and distribution of goods, but also to the synchronization of the activities of multiple players in the international transportation chain, so as to reduce transportation costs and provide value-added services to the cargo, improving the productivity and competitiveness of national economies.