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**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
WORLD TRADE POINT FEDERATION'S
INTER-AMERICAN TRADE POINT FORUM**

16–17 June 2004 – Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The eleventh Inter-American Trade Point Forum (IATPF) was held as a parallel event to UNCTAD XI. The forum focused on issues that were also on the agenda of UNCTAD XI – the use of information and communication tools for economic development and the promotion of e-commerce for enterprises. In addition, specific inter-American issues were put on the agenda for discussion.
2. The meeting was attended by representatives of UNCTAD and the World Trade Point Federation (WTPF) as well as Trade Point Directors from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. A number of observers also attended the sessions, including representatives of institutions wishing to set up new Trade Points, representatives of Trade Points from other regions of the world (Italy and South Africa), official government observers (Germany) and WTPF partners.
3. At the annual WTPF General Assembly of December 2003, several decisions had been made concerning the work plan of Trade Points for 2004, and new tools had been presented. In Brazil, an overview was given of progress by Trade Points in the Americas regarding the plan outlined at the December meeting. This region has always shown strong commitment to new, innovative ideas, and figures were presented showing that the majority of Trade Points had implemented the new Trade Point website concept, which contributed greatly to clear branding and promotion of Trade Points.
4. Besides the new website concept, Trade Points in the Americas had contributed significantly to the posting of national information on services related to “world trade events” (in the site’s Market Point section), where exhibitions, expositions and similar events are presented by business category; “trade-related sites” (also in the Market Point section), where links can be found to interesting sites on trade, along with explanations; and the “trade library” (in the Knowledge Point section), where e-documents on trade are available with an introduction in English. Some Trade Points have posted over 100 items of information.

5. These new tools bring various advantages to enterprises that are members of a Trade Point. In a single physical and virtual location, a trustworthy business environment has been created that makes nearby yet previously unreachable markets accessible. If an enterprise has Internet access, it can easily find on the website of its Trade Point information on trade regulations, trade-related service providers and the business climate in any country where one or more Trade Points are located, as well as the means to post and seek trade opportunities.
6. Should the member enterprise not have access to the Internet, or should it require more personalized assistance, the Trade Point and its team can assist in finding requested information, doing market research, posting trade opportunities and increasing market visibility through, among others, the development and hosting of a website and the creation of e-mail addresses. The Trade Point Profiles area available on the website of each Trade Point and the WTPF shows a list of services that Trade Points offer. To this list a new service will shortly be added.
7. This service is the Global Trade Directory Service (GTDS), which is the worldwide company database of the WTPF that is currently being updated with data on member enterprises from Trade Points by WTPF's partner Siemens Business Services. To familiarize Trade Points in the Americas with this service, which is the core service of the Trade Point network, a presentation and training session were given. The need was stressed for Trade Points to mobilize member enterprises to register with the GTDS.
8. A brief update was given on the total number of Trade Points in the Americas and their stage of development. Official requests received by the WTPF for the setting up of new Trade Points had shown an annual increase of 30 per cent. The IATPF Steering Committee was working actively to implement its objectives in line with its legal framework.