

CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT ON THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND FOREIGN MINISTERS'
MEETING OF THE FORUM FOR EAST ASIA-LATIN AMERICA COOPERATION
Manila, 28-29 Jan 2004

The Second Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the Forum for East Asia-Latin America Cooperation resulted in several key outputs.

We admitted two new members, Nicaragua and Guatemala. This makes FEALAC the largest inter- regional grouping with 32 members, linking South East Asia, East Asia, Oceania, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

We approved the reports of the Working Group on Education, Science and Technology, on Politics and Culture, and on Economy and Society. They now have the full mandate to implement their projects.

We saw the need for a broader and more comprehensive discussion of political and security issues, and entrusted the Senior Officials with the task of ensuring that these issues are discussed by the appropriate Working Groups.

We had a retreat in Tagaytay where we had a frank and candid exchange of views on issues of relevance to the two regions. We also approved the Manila Plan of Action, which sets the Forum' s priorities and direction for the next stage of its development. It calls for, among others, specific projects in capacity building, cooperation in enhancing micro, small and medium enterprises, as well as a joint approach to the security challenges of the day. We emphasized that special attention should be given to those projects that the community-level impact.

The Ministers also agreed that they must exert efforts in other fora to make FEALAC complementary to existing efforts of other fora to uplift the lives of the more than two billion people that FEALAC represents. They thus shared views on areas for possible cooperation, and tasked the Working Groups to translate these ideas into action. They also recognized that FEALAC has an important part to play in the international system, and agreed that FEALAC officials in the relevant fora would enter into a dialogue to promote a better understanding of their priorities and interests in, among others, the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

The Forum's inaugural Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Santiago, Chile, in 2001. The FEALAC process is still in its infancy and is still evolving. We expect that FEALAC will develop its own character in incremental steps as the member countries become more familiar with each other and find more areas of mutual interest.