Ibero-american Summit: Summary Of Developments

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On July 18-19, 21 heads of state of Latin America, Spain and Portugal convened for a summit in Guadalajara, Mexico. A principal agenda topic was the formation of a Latin American free-trade zone to compete more effectively with the European Economic Community (EEC) and other global economic powers. The following Iberian-American summit will be held in Madrid next year, coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the European arrival in the Americas. Highlights are summarized below.

July 18: Colombian President Cesar Gaviria told reporters he was considering resuming diplomatic relations with Havana. Cuban President Fidel Castro told assembled heads of state that his government "wants to belong this integrated and united Latin America, even going so far as to discuss any topic, including spilling her blood to defend what is today the front line of sovereign independence of our people." According to Castro, "With the great economic powers, there are no friends, only interests...The world heads in an ever worse direction." Organization of American States Secretary General Joao Baena Soares said the OAS may open its doors to Cuba in the near future: "It is time to reconsider the Cuba's position in the organization. The conditions of the Nineties are different from those in the Sixties." July 19: Uruguayan President Luis Alberto Lacalle asserted that Latin American governments are "not willing to accept any type of agreement" under the aegis of the Uruguay Round. Latin American agro-exporters continue opposed to subsidized prices by the EEC on agricultural exports. Lacalle described multilateral financial institutions' treatment of Latin American economic reform efforts as "myopic." In a joint declaration, Spain, Portugal and Latin American nations pledged to cooperate more closely as an Ibero-American group to wield greater influence in world affairs. The statement read, "We propose to focus the political will of our governments to provide the solutions the current challenges demand and to forge our common history and culture into an instrument of unity and development based on dialogue, cooperation and solidarity." The declaration expressed support for peace negotiations in Central America, and said Latin American nations would do nothing to obstruct them. Next, the presidents stated that superpower domination of international organizations such as the United Nations must be diluted. The 21 heads of state said they are committed to restructuring such organizations on a more just and democratic basis. The heads of state said they would promote the strengthening of democracy, but also emphasized respect for the right of nations to self-determination. The presidents said they would begin discussions on codifying international law, on strengthening mechanisms to solve international disputes peacefully and on laying down norms for armed conflicts. According to the statement, environmental destruction is linked to development problems. Industrialized countries were called on to provide financing and technology to Third World nations to redress the balance. The presidents pledged to develop an international framework to protect the environment. The declaration also contained commitments to cooperate in anti-drug efforts, combatting disease and in improving educational and cultural cooperation throughout Ibero-America. Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez suggested forming an elected Latin American parliament by 1995. Argentine President Carlos Menem proposed creation of a common Latin American currency. No action was taken on either proposal. July 21: Reuter cited unidentified diplomats as saying that both Chile and Colombia restored consular and trade relations with Cuba. In addition, President Castro's offer to give preferential treatment to Latin American
investment in Cuba was welcomed, said the diplomats. Havana is expected to concentrate on trade with traditional allies Mexico, Venezuela and Ecuador. (Basic data from AP, 07/18/91; AFP, 07/18/91, 07/19/91; Deutsche Press Agentur, 07/19/91; New York Times, 07/20/91; Washington Post, 07/20/91; Reuter, 07/21/91)

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