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## Latin American Economic System (sela) Plans Regional Conference On Industrialization Policy

by Barbara Khol

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On Aug. 14-16 in Caracas, government experts from 26 member-nations of the Latin American Economic System (SELA) convened to discuss plans for a regional conference on industrialization policy. Representatives of 12 international and sub-regional organizations also attended. In 1988, the SELA ministerial council called on the secretariat to organize the conference as a means to revitalize industry in member-nations, following the "severe slump" of the 1980s. Previously to take place in early August in Sao Paulo, Brazil, participants rescheduled the conference for October. The conference is sponsored by the UN Organization for Industrial Development. SELA studies indicate that a decline in participation in world manufactures trade coincided with a widening technological gap with the industrial North. SELA recommendations for development strategies aimed at increasing efficiency and competitiveness are contained in a document titled, "Bases for the Latin American and Caribbean Industrialization Program in the 1990s." Observations and statements appearing in the document are highlighted below. \* In the 1980s industry recovered a determining role in the global economy. The participation of developing nations in global industrial product increased from 11% to 14%. Meanwhile, the Latin American and Caribbean contribution to world manufactures trade declined from 6.5% to 6.1%. (The Southeast Asian contribution increased from 2.4 to 3.9%.) \* The accumulated deficit in gross capital formation over the 1980s is estimated at between \$650 billion and \$700 billion. \* In contrast to the prevailing perspective that government actuation in directing and regulating national economies should be reduced, the government's role must evidently be strengthened toward creating a macro-economic environment conducive to a "new phase of industrialization and development." \* Government actuation is particularly indicated in the areas of education and technical training, science and technology, infrastructure, and organizing consensus and compromise among diverse social and economic interest groups. \* Government policies must encourage the incorporation of vanguard technologies in production processes, domestic savings accumulation, industrial integration projects, and compromise among government, employers and workers as social actors. \* SELA recommends selective and temporary application of protectionist measures for industries requiring large-scale capital investment in research and development, and costly technical training programs. \* Governments' purchasing power must be utilized, particularly in the acquisition of capital goods, electronics and informatics products. \* Governments must reduce administrative red tape to permit free circulation of goods. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 08/13/91; AFP, 08/15/91, 08/17/91)

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