

**Forum of Federations**

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### Rapporteur's Report - Group A

On Friday afternoon and on Saturday morning the Conference broke into two groups. The first meeting of both groups discussed preparation for negotiations, negotiation of international agreements, and the nature of sub-national participation; with lead discussants on international trade, the environment, and social policy. The format of the second meeting was the same but the focus was the implementation and enforcement of international agreements at the sub-national level.

While both groups had French and English translation, Group A was also provided with Spanish translation which had a dramatic impact on the composition of our sessions, as most of the Spanish speakers gravitated to our group and about ninety percent of the interventions were in Spanish. The majority of the active participants came from Latin America, mostly from Argentina and Brazil but also from Mexico. Participants from Canada and Nigeria also made contributions. On one occasion a unilingual participant from Brazil made a long intervention in Portuguese which was initially translated into Spanish by the moderator.

There was a sharp divergence between the proposed questions and the content of our interactions. We did not discuss preparation for negotiations, negotiation of international agreements, and the nature of sub-national participation in a sustained way nor did we specifically examine the implementation and enforcement of international agreements at the sub-national

level. It became apparent these questions were ahead of where we were as a group, and discussion generally dealt with country specific considerations.

We quickly agreed that globalization was having an effect on Constituent Units (CUs) in each of the policy areas addressed by the lead discussants - trade, the environment, and social policy. Regional and global economic integration, environmental degradation, and their social consequences are forcing CUs to respond.

While this is a point of communality aspects of divergence soon came to predominate. It was clear (for lack of more appropriate terms) that societies in the first, second, and third worlds are experiencing globalization differently. The impact on CUs of globalization varies depending on the nature of the societies of which they are a part.

Another point of divergence was that CUs have different degrees of dependence on, and independence from, their federal governments. This can be based on constitutional differences and also upon the size of a CU and its related bureaucratic capabilities. One thing smaller CUs share is their federal governments can be essential in the redistribution of resources and the defence of their interests in the face of demands from bigger units. Senate reform, while often not feasible, is of some relevance as the more an upper chamber is an effective loci for the brokerage of CU interests the less likely CUs are to act independently.

On Saturday morning some participants said CUs should not be involved in international activities, that CUs could participate internally but otherwise CUs were inefficient and just lobby groups, and that foreign relations are federal matters and strictly within the legal purview of central governments. This view was contested by others who said CUs should be imaginative and creative in advancing their international activities and ideally the system of CU involvement

and federal-CU relations should be allowed to evolve. It was added that CU involvement is part of the construction of civil society and the democratizing process, which is the perspective of noted scholar John Kincaid who spoke later that afternoon during the plenary session.

The rapporteurs' role was to summarize discussion and to note general recommendations and recommendations concerning future Forum programming. There was a broad consensus for the recommendation of more institutionalized CU input into negotiations which was taken to mean more sharing of information between the two levels of government and opportunities for greater participation by CUs and should not be confused with formalization which was seen as less productive and undesirable. The situation of CUs from federation to federation, while sharing some similarities, is also very different. There are so many combinations and permutations that speaking in general terms blurs critical differences, and it was recommended that future meetings have a country or regional focus - that the basic organizing principle should be geographic rather than thematic. This recommendation is consistent with the Forum's plans for 2001 to hold conferences in Nigeria and Mexico on federalism in those countries.

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