



NEWS RELEASE

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SBA, Ecuador Foreign Ministry Sign Statement of Collaboration *Administrator, Deputy Promote International Trade in Turkey, China, Mexico*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Small Business Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, Industrialization, Fishery and Competitiveness of the Republic of Ecuador have signed a Statement of Collaboration for the latter to join the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Congress of the Americas.

The SME Congress is a hemispheric network of micro, small and medium enterprise providers created to enhance the ability of SMEs to participate and benefit from international trade opportunities and facilitate opportunities for SME trade linkages throughout the Americas. The SBA is the lead coordinator for the SME Congress.

The Statement of Collaboration was signed June 28, 2004, by SBA Deputy Administrator Melanie Sabelhaus, and by Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Trade Ivonne A-Baki at the SBA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Also signing as a witness was Ecuador's Ambassador to the United States, Raul Gangotena. SBA Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Trade, Luz Hopewell, coordinated the signing ceremony.

The intention of the statement is to have the parties cooperate by:

- Engaging in dialogue with other organizations in the Western Hemisphere to consolidate, strengthen and energize this network of SME service providers.
- Furthering the SME Congress of the Americas through their presence and participation in the first SME Congress meeting in Santiago, Chile, scheduled to take place October 5-6, 2004.
- Informing the Summit of the Americas coordinators in their respective governments of this cooperation, which relates to the Growth and Equity component of the Summit of the Americas Action Plan, signed in Quebec in 2001.
- Facilitating the sharing of information and experiences regarding small business development strategies, and product and services that each participant provides.

"We are delighted to have this opportunity to work with the Republic of Ecuador. Minister Ivonne A-Baki and I both acknowledge that the real work begins now. We are committed to delivering results for small businesses in both our countries," said SBA Deputy Administrator Sabelhaus.

In recent months the SBA has been very active in promoting international trade and the creation, expansion of new markets for U.S businesses. Some of the most salient events in this area were:

- Signing a similar Statement of Collaboration with Colombia's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism to incorporate Colombia into the SME Congress of the Americas.
- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Ex-Im Bank on a program to enhance the ability of small businesses to gain access to capital for their export transactions.
- Participating in this year's U.S.-Mexico Partnership for Prosperity Entrepreneurial Workshop.
- Meeting with Mexican President Vicente Fox and Mexico's Minister of Commerce to discuss their interest in creating an agency modeled after the SBA in Mexico.
- Signing a Letter of Intent with the People's Republic of China to cooperate in facilitating U.S. exports to that country and work to foster contacts between U.S. SMEs and Chinese companies.
- Signing a Letter of Intent with the Israeli Small and Medium Enterprise Authority to initiate institutional cooperation.
- Participating in the second Ministerial Conference of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Turkey.

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at <http://www.sba.gov> in English, or www.negocios.gov in Spanish.

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