



FPC launches Latin America work with seminar on sustainable development

16th March 2006

Stephen Twigg, Director of the Foreign Policy Centre, chaired '**Enterprise in Emerging Economies – Who Can Deliver Sustainable Development?**', a round-table discussion launching what the FPC hopes to be the first in a series of events and publications on Latin America.

The seminar was attended by a number of figures from the private, public and NGO sectors. Among the speakers were **HE Mr Luis Solari Tudela**, Peruvian Ambassador to the UK; **Paul Bulcke**, Nestlé's Executive Vice President for the Americas and **Thiago de Aragão**, a Brazilian political analyst and the FPC's new Latin America Research Associate.

The discussion looked at a number of different issues from fairtrade to economic liberalisation and the breadth of opinions reflected the number of challenges in the region, and the importance of these debates.

Most agreed that a healthy civil society has a two way relationship with a strong economy and with the right structural reforms can deliver sustainable development. If governments and businesses help foster civil society organisations, economic growth and development will follow.

It was suggested that some Latin American nations are presently experiencing a 'syndrome of Salvationism', with leaders such as Venezuela's Hugo Chavez portraying themselves as saviours of their countries' economies. Opinion differed on this point. Some argued that the main issue holding back development was the 'distortion' of wealth distribution, limited to problems in the structures of Latin American economies.

Others argued that it is elites who are able to deliver sustainable development, suggesting that elites need to develop their positions intellectually, as well as economically. This would, at least in part, come about quicker if governments were to reduce their financial support for businesses, forcing companies to compete in a liberalised economy.

Held during 'Fairtrade Fortnight', the role of fairtrade was inevitably discussed. Though few disputed its merits, it was argued that it is only a short- to medium-term 'sticking plaster', and that governments and societies need to work on longer term solutions such as structural reforms and trade liberalisation. Others saw the work of governments to have already helped, with fairtrade the main objective of the WTO's Doha Round.