



---

# U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**MEDIA INQUIRIES:**

Donna Thiessen  
(703) 875-4357

## **USTDA SPONSORS DR-CAFTA TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY WORKSHOP**

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA – (November 20, 2008) Promoting enhanced cooperation and building trade capacity under the United States-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) is the goal of a USTDA-sponsored workshop that opened today at the Marriott Hotel in Guatemala City. The two-day event, which is taking place as part of the agency's DR-CAFTA Trade Integration Initiative, attracted participation by representatives of each of the DR-CAFTA countries to discuss their telecommunications sector commitments under the trade agreement and how to develop open and competitive telecommunications markets.

“Establishing the right regulatory framework for growth and competition in the telecommunications sector is essential for the trade relationships envisioned by DR-CAFTA to reach their full potential,” said USTDA Director Walther. “At the same time, the telecommunications sector has the capacity to serve as a catalyst for growth in other sectors.”

DR-CAFTA promotes important reforms in the domestic legal and business environment in signatory countries to encourage competitive business development and investment, transparency and rule-of-law. Under the theme “Laying a Path for Growth and Innovation,” the workshop will support these objectives by enabling participants to exchange experiences on telecommunications regulatory issues and analyze concrete examples of how other countries have successfully addressed those issues. The workshop is being funded by USTDA with organizational and technical support from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Communications and Information Policy, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the International Trade Administration.

The workshop agenda includes sessions on best practices in universal service implementation, a regional view of information and communications technology in development, telecommunications as an engine for commercial growth, the benefits of liberalization and opportunities in the era of convergence, regulation of major suppliers, spectrum allocation and auctions, effective regulatory frameworks, and areas for future collaboration.

(More)

In addition to Director Walther, the other speakers at today's opening session were Guatemalan Vice Minister of Communications, Infrastructure, and Housing Lucrecia Ruiz; U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala Stephen G. McFarland; Guatemalan Vice Minister of Integration and Foreign Trade Ruben Morales; and Ambassador David A. Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy.

USTDA launched its DR-CAFTA Trade Integration Initiative in 2005 to support priority projects in the Dominican Republic and Central America that further the benefits of increased trade, regional connectivity and economic growth under DR-CAFTA. To date, USTDA has invested over \$8.0 million under the Initiative in support of the region's National Trade Capacity Building Strategies.

The U.S. Department of State's support for the Workshop comes about through its administration of the President's Digital Freedom Initiative, a partnership among multiple federal agencies, industry, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and universities. It aims to expand connectivity around the world, particularly by helping developing nations utilize information and communication technologies for economic development and to broaden social and economic benefits.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.