

## CASS International Forum: Latin America and the Caribbean in 2008-2009

### Social Cohesion & New Challenges of the Global Financial Crisis



Opening Ceremony

Under the theme of "social cohesion & new challenges of the global financial crisis", "CASS International Forum: Latin America and the Caribbean in 2008-2009" was held at the Academic Hall of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. The forum is the only annual international academic symposium held to discuss the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in Mainland China. The 2009 annual meeting was organized by CASS Bureau of International Cooperation and Academic Division of International Studies, as well as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), operated by the Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS) at CASS, and co-organized by China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

Prof. Wang Weiguang (CASS Executive Vice-President), Mr. Cheng Siwei (Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Ninth & Tenth National People's Congress of China), Ms. Thelma Jane Askey (OECD Deputy Secretary-General), Mr. Yang Wanming (Director-General of the Department of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Mr. Zhang Xin (Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs at CNPC) and Mr. Wang Yulin (Deputy Director of the Bureau of Latin American Affairs at International Department of Central

Committee of CPC) attended and addressed the opening ceremony. They spoke highly of Sino-LAC cooperation in political, economic, diplomatic and social realms and stressed that a new stage of comprehensive cooperation had come. They also pointed out that China and LAC, influenced by the current global financial crisis at varying degrees, were sharing common challenges on establishing confidence, maintaining growth, creating employment and enhancing social cohesion. They argued that the two parties, in their responses to the financial crisis, should coordinate and cooperate on policies, learn from each other on wisdom and experience, so as to expand the all-round cooperation for mutual benefit and win-win progress.



Prof. Wang Weiguang (CASS Executive Vice-President)



Mr. Cheng Siwei (Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Ninth & Tenth National People's Congress of China)



Ms. Thelma Jane Askey (OECD Deputy Secretary-General)

LAC countries' ambassadors and diplomats to China participated in discussions. As their representatives, Costa Rican, Argentine and Brazilian ambassadors were invited to make keynote speeches on the meeting. They illustrated their home countries' political and economic situation, current policies and the relationships with China. They believed that the win-win conjunction between China and LAC, who had common interests in international affairs, would provide a harmonious future for the relationship between both parties in terms of growth, offering the people with the greater well-being that they deserve.



LAC countries' ambassadors and diplomats to China

One of the main topics of the forum —"Government policies and social cohesion" —was

the theme for both OECD Development Center's *Latin American Economic Outlook* and ILAS' *Special Annual Report*. The two institutions jointly announced their 2009 annual reports on the meeting. On behalf of their own institution, Dr. Charles P. Oman (Head of Strategy, OECD Development Centre) and Dr. Zheng Bingwen (Director-General of ILAS) made statements on their views on LAC's social cohesion. Dr. Oman acknowledged that during the last decade, Latin America had experienced some improvement in the realm of fiscal policy, particularly from a macro perspective, but Latin American governments would need to strengthen fiscal policy as an instrument to promote growth, reduce inequality and provide their citizens with the necessary means to succeed. Dr. Zheng introduced the main contents of ILAS' 8 reports on Latin American social cohesion, concerning its definition and its relations with political development, governance capability, fiscal policies, education, employment, social security and poverty reduction.



Dr. Charles P. Oman (Head of Strategy, OECD Development Centre)

In addition, ILAS announced *Yellow Book of Latin America and the Caribbean — Annual Report on Latin America and the Caribbean (2008-2009)*, which presented the new changes staged in LAC in 2008 and prognosticated tentatively the perspective of the region in 2009. In

connection with the other topic of the forum "energy and Sino-LAC energy cooperation", ILAS scholars delivered speeches and made comments. They argued that LAC, which was one of the first overseas stations for Chinese oil companies, was an important region for Chinese energy enterprises to implement their "going abroad" strategies. Toward Chinese companies aiming at investing LAC, scholars suggested: firstly, to attach a high priority to LAC markets and insist on the long-term strategies of taking full advantage of "two markets and two resources"; secondly, to focus on optimizing the trade structure by the increase of high-tech products in export and the corresponding reduction in the textile, clothing, footwear, toys and other labor-intensive traditional products; thirdly, to take the key step to make direct investment in LAC; fourthly, to take initiatives to look for business opportunities based on long-term development.

"CASS International Forum" is a platform designed to promote international academic exchanges and cooperation. Under the forum, LAC Workshop is an important annual academic meeting for Chinese circle of Latin American Studies. With the support from the people of all circles and LAC countries' ambassadors and diplomats to China, the forum has been held successively for 5 sessions. There were two outstanding features in the 2009 meeting. One was OECD's participation in the activities of the conference as one of the organizers, which would help to further increase the awareness and influence of this forum. The other was the first occurrence of Chinese enterprises, CNPC, as one of the organizers and speakers in the forum, which enriched the content of this event. These new bright spots would help Chinese society to know the LAC region and promote the development of Sino-LAC relations, the upgrade of the level and the influence of Latin American Studies.



Mr. Cheng Siwei (Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Ninth & Tenth National People's Congress of China), Ms. Thelma Jane Askey (OECD Deputy Secretary-General) and Costa Rican, Argentine and Brazilian ambassadors to China



Prof. Wang Weiguang (CASS Executive Vice-President), Prof. Zheng Bingwen (Director-General of ILAS) and Mr. Zhang Xin (Director of the Bureau of Foreign Affairs at CNPC)