

integration between member countries under a new Andean Integration System (SAI).

The member countries and bodies of the Andean Integration System are now working to establish an Andean Common Market by Dec. 2005 at the latest and to implement a Common Foreign Policy, carry out a social agenda, execute a Community policy on border integration, and devise actions for harmonizing and reaching macroeconomic targets.

Organization. The Andean Presidential Council, composed of the presidents of the member states, is the highest-level body of the Andean Integration System (SAI). The Commission and the Andean Council of Foreign Ministers are legislative bodies. The General Secretariat is the executive body and the Andean Parliament is the deliberative body of the SAI. The Court of Justice, which began operating in 1984, resolves disputes between members and interprets legislation. The SAI has other institutions: Andean Development Corporation (CAF), Latin American Reserve Fund (FLAR), Simon Bolivar Andean University, Andean Business Advisory Council, Andean Labour Advisory Council and various Social Agreements.

Official language. Spanish.

Headquarters: Avda Paseo de la República 3895, San Isidro, Lima 17, Peru.

Website: <http://www.comunidadandina.org>

e-mail: contacto@comunidadandina.org

Secretary-General: Allan Wagner Tizón (Peru).

SOUTHERN COMMON MARKET (MERCOSUR)

Founded in March 1991 by the Treaty of Asunción between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, the treaty committed the signatories to the progressive reduction of tariffs culminating in the formation of a common market on 1 Jan. 1995. This duly came into effect as a free trade zone affecting 90% of commodities. A common external tariff averaging 14% applies to 80% of trade with countries outside Mercosur. Details were agreed at foreign minister level by the Protocol of Ouro Preto signed on 17 Dec. 1994.

In 1996 Chile negotiated a free-trade agreement with Mercosur which came into effect on 1 Oct. Two weeks later, Bolivia signed the same. In Dec. that year, an agreement conferring associate membership on Bolivia was also endorsed.

Organization. The member states' foreign ministers form a Council responsible for leading the integration process, the chairmanship of which rotates every six months. The permanent executive body is the Common Market Group of member states, which takes decisions by consensus. There is a Trade Commission and Joint Parliamentary Commission, an arbitration tribunal whose decisions are binding on member countries, and a secretariat in Montevideo.

Headquarters: Rincón 575 P12, 11000 Montevideo, Uruguay.

Website: <http://www.mercosur.org.uy> (Spanish and Portuguese only)

Administrative Secretary: Reginaldo Braga Arcuri (Brazil).

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

The Convention establishing the ACS was signed on 24 July 1994 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with the aim of promoting consultation, co-operation and