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**IV Inter-American Dialogue of High-Level MSME Authorities  
“Public Policies to Enhance Competitiveness, Innovation  
and Internationalization of MSME’s”  
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**[As Prepared for Delivery]**

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Thank you very much! Good afternoon!

Thank you, Maryse, for the kind introduction and for the warm welcome to OAS headquarters.

I am honored to be with you and this distinguished group of leaders today.

I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you through my participation in the America’s Competitiveness Exchange and through my work with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

As someone who has worked for global firms and served as a federal, state, and regional economic development professional, I know how important it is to exchange best practices and successful experiences so that we can set the proper conditions for business growth and economic prosperity.

As President Obama said at the Summit of the Americas in Panama, "...Global commerce, because of technology, because of logistics, [it] is erasing the boundaries by which we think about businesses not just for large companies, but also for small and medium-sized companies as well."

The work that you are all doing – and the work that we are doing together through cross-hemisphere collaboration - to advance the development of micro, small and medium enterprises in the Western Hemisphere is critical and commendable, and I thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Today, I am pleased to highlight the 3<sup>rd</sup> America's Competitiveness Exchange for Innovation and Entrepreneurship – or ACE - which will kick-off on Sunday in Minneapolis.

The U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration, International Trade Administration, and Minority Business Development Agency – in coordination with the OAS and the U.S. Department of State – have the honor to serve as hosts and lead coordinators.

As you know, the ACE is included in the Inter-American Competitiveness Network Work Plan for 2015, which is designed to facilitate collaboration on the 150 successful experiences that OAS Member States shared in the 2012-2014 Signs of Competitiveness in the Americas Report.

ACE is also an important pillar of the US-Mexico High Level Economic Dialogue, which is promoting entrepreneurship, stimulating innovation, and encouraging the development of human capital; while also developing initiatives to strengthen economic development along the shared Mexico-US border.

This year's Exchange will bring senior officials from across the Western Hemisphere together to tour Midwestern centers of innovation; and the numbers for this year's exchange are impressive: 47 participants from 28 countries will be joining us next week.

And, like our prior ACE trips, this 3<sup>rd</sup> ACE trip will feature a full roster of critical participants from local and federal government, including Members of Congress, mayors, and representatives from federal agencies.

The ACE group will visit and tour 43 sites in the great Midwestern states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois.

The featured sites target the following clusters: manufacturing, medical devices, water, agriculture, energy, and information and communication technology.

The American Midwest is perhaps best known historically as a leading center for America's manufacturing, heavy industry, and agriculture.

Building upon that proud and storied history, the Midwest is increasingly known as an innovation hotbed, setting the bar for high performance collaboration and competitiveness.

I know that I speak for all of us here today and on the Exchange next week when I express deep gratitude to our Midwest hosts for their efforts to make the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACE a success.

I am thrilled to point out that, during this year's exchange, we will be meeting with leaders from several partner organizations in which we at the US Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Administration have invested in. They include:

- The Natural Resources Research Institute in Minneapolis, which is a non-profit applied research organization with a mission to improve the economy of Minnesota by helping its industries compete in the global marketplace with improved or new products and more efficient processes.
- The Water Council in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is convening the region's existing water companies and research clusters, developing education programs to train our talent, and building partnerships that cut across all sectors and geographic boundaries.
- And, on the Illinois Institute of Technology campus, we will tour the University Technology Park, one of the nation's fastest-growing hubs for high-tech innovation.

These internationally-recognized initiatives are strengthening economic and innovation ecosystems by helping to nurture, strengthen, and develop collaboration that is so critical establishing mutually-beneficial, long-term global and regional partnerships.

We are excited to give our ACE partners the opportunity to see and learn first-hand from successful models of innovation.

Critically, our engagement through ACE will increase the prospect of increased commerce and trade between participating economies; and it will help accelerate business opportunities for all stakeholders.

The opportunities are indeed there; just look at the promising results from our previous exchanges. Let me give you just a few:

A CEO of a Mexican medical device start up is partnering with the Global Center for Medical Innovation and Clemson's International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR), and is considering locating to the US to take advantage of the incubator connections these institutions provide.

CU – ICAR is also partnering with the Mexican Auto supply industry for new technologies relating to supply chains.

New supply chains from Peru are being established with North Carolina's Manufacturing Solutions Center which will allow local textile mills to rapidly expand with an entire new product line.

The county of Barbados and Belize are changing their economic development model to replicate EDA's thus adding more stability to their economies.

The country of Costa Rica is working with Georgia Tech University on creating a science and innovation exchange.

In closing, let me say that we all know that when we talk about the economy of the Americas, we are really talking about a collection of regional economies.

And, therefore, when our regions are strong, America as a whole is stronger.

We also know that we are not in this alone; that in this global economy, we need to work with our partners across the Americas to strengthen our hemispheric ties and build on ideas and models that work, together.

President Obama, Secretary Pritzker, and all of us at the Department of Commerce and EDA understand this, and we strongly believe that when the right partners come together and increase their level of interaction — good things happen for job creation, increased investment, and improved prosperity.

The Exchange and your continued demonstrated commitment are testaments to this philosophy.

If I can leave you with a call to action, it would be this:

Let's continue to work together to make the best possible choices and to advance the smartest policies and approaches to economic development.

Let's continue to find the new channels for working together in new ways for better outcomes.

Through continued, results oriented engagement, we will meet our call to action to build mutually-beneficial partnerships and continue to raise the economic bar for all our economies.

We are grateful for the partnership and are excited for great progress moving forward.

It has been an honor to be with you – and if you are participating in ACE, I look forward to being with you next week.

Thank you.

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