

PREAMBLE

The Government of the Republic of Costa Rica, the Government of the Dominican Republic, the Government of the Republic of El Salvador, the Government of the Republic of Guatemala, the Government of the Republic of Honduras, the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua, and the Government of the United States of America, resolved to:

STRENGTHEN the special bonds of friendship and cooperation among their nations and promote regional economic integration;

CONTRIBUTE to the harmonious development and expansion of world trade and provide a catalyst to broader international cooperation;

CREATE an expanded and secure market for the goods and services produced in their territories while recognizing the differences in their levels of development and the size of their economies;

AVOID distortions to their reciprocal trade;

ESTABLISH clear and mutually advantageous rules governing their trade;

ENSURE a predictable commercial framework for business planning and investment;

BUILD on their respective rights and obligations under the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization and other multilateral and bilateral instruments of cooperation;

SEEK to facilitate regional trade by promoting efficient and transparent customs procedures that reduce costs and ensure predictability for their importers and exporters;

ENHANCE the competitiveness of their firms in global markets;

FOSTER creativity and innovation, and promote trade in goods and services that are the subject of intellectual property rights;

PROMOTE transparency and eliminate bribery and corruption in international trade and investment;

CREATE new opportunities for economic and social development in the region;

PROTECT, enhance, and enforce basic workers' rights and strengthen their cooperation on labor matters;

CREATE new employment opportunities and improve working conditions and living standards in their respective territories;

BUILD on their respective international commitments on labor matters;

IMPLEMENT this Agreement in a manner consistent with environmental protection and conservation, promote sustainable development, and strengthen their cooperation on environmental matters;

PROTECT and preserve the environment and enhance the means for doing so, including through the conservation of natural resources in their respective territories;

PRESERVE their flexibility to safeguard the public welfare;

RECOGNIZE the interest of the Central American Parties in strengthening and deepening their regional economic integration; and

CONTRIBUTE to hemispheric integration and provide an impetus toward establishing the Free Trade Area of the Americas;

HAVE AGREED as follows:

Chapter One Initial Provisions

Article 1.1: Establishment of a Free Trade Area

The Parties to this Agreement, consistent with Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and Article V of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, hereby establish a free trade area.

Article 1.2: Objectives

1. The objectives of this Agreement, as elaborated more specifically through its principles and rules, including national treatment, most-favored-nation treatment, and transparency, are to:
 - (a) encourage expansion and diversification of trade between the Parties;
 - (b) eliminate barriers to trade in, and facilitate the cross-border movement of, goods and services between the territories of the Parties;
 - (c) promote conditions of fair competition in the free trade area;
 - (d) substantially increase investment opportunities in the territories of the Parties;
 - (e) provide adequate and effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in each Party's territory;
 - (f) create effective procedures for the implementation and application of this Agreement, for its joint administration, and for the resolution of disputes; and
 - (g) establish a framework for further bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation to expand and enhance the benefits of this Agreement.
2. The Parties shall interpret and apply the provisions of this Agreement in the light of its objectives set out in paragraph 1 and in accordance with applicable rules of international law.

Article 1.3: Relation to Other Agreements

1. The Parties affirm their existing rights and obligations with respect to each other under the WTO Agreement and other agreements to which such Parties are party.