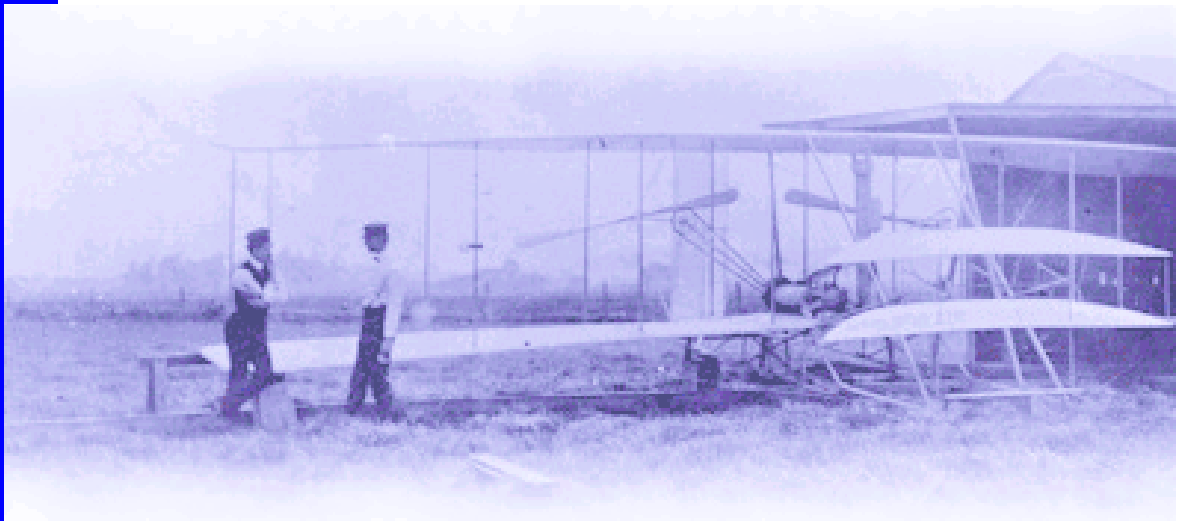


# Business Plan



Office of Science and Technology  
Organization of American States  
July 2001

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# Executive Summary



Cognizant of the far-reaching commitment assumed by the Organization of American States (OAS) with regard to the different mandates and recommendations issued by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas and their respective governing bodies, as well as the proposal to restructure and modernize the OAS, as announced at the General Assembly in Costa Rica (2001), the Office of Science and Technology (OST) has formulated this Business Plan with the purpose, among others, of highlighting its performance and potential contribution in this process.

It is imperative that the OAS, and specifically each of its divisions, be equipped with the human and financial resources necessary to fulfill the commitments acquired by the Organization in the historic process currently under way in the Western Hemisphere.

The OAS member States face a wide range of challenges that can be synthesized into the need to reduce poverty in the region and to raise the standards of living of its inhabitants. In the current process of globalization and the efforts to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas by January 1, 2005, the technology gap (to which the digital gap was recently added) and differences in economic development in the region are obstacles that must be overcome if the member States of the Organization are to attain suitable economic, commercial, political and social integration and sustainability.

The OST's knowledge of national, regional and international institutions engaged in science and technology activities, its recognized experience in technical cooperation with the countries of the region, and the subject areas of its expertise, are key tools that put the Office in a position of comparative advantage for fulfilling the mandates and recommendations received by the OAS in the area of science and technology and, because of their cross-cutting nature, in many other disciplines as well.

Accordingly, the OST's mission to develop, foster and support activities that contribute to the advancement of science and technology in the hemisphere, in order to promote the countries' economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological development, takes on renewed importance, as reaffirmed in the mandates and recommendations issued by different bodies of the Summits of the Americas process.

The principal mandates of the Office stem from the Inter-American Science and Technology Program (PRICYT), which is part of the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). It takes into account the recommendations of the Summits of Heads of State and Government of the Americas, and of the ministerial meetings on science and technology, and that have been endorsed by the different political bodies of the Organization, including the General Assembly, the meetings of CIDI, and those of the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCYT).

Briefly, they concern the use of science, technology and innovation for bringing about social development, strengthening the business sector, and protecting the environment through the use of cleaner and less polluting technologies. These substantive mandates require the development of adequate infrastructure for metrology in trade as well as for communications, information technologies, connectivity and the development of policies and strategies on science and technology relative to human resources training. Over the course of the years, both the OAS (and the OST as an integral part of it) have seen an increase in the number of topics needing to be addressed and considered to be of priority by the political leaders of the hemisphere, for the development of their countries.

The OST, in collaboration with other OAS responsibility centers and other institutions engaged in its sphere of activities, has set for itself a series of objectives, which are summarized as follows: to strengthen technical capabilities and programs in the hemisphere; to advise the different governing organs of the Organization in all matters related to science, technology and innovation, and to carry out their mandates as required; to support the OAS member States in developing policies, strategies, programs and projects on science and technology; to provide advisory and technical secretariat services to specialized meetings on science and technology, including ministerial meetings; to assist other technical units of the Organization with regard to cross-cutting aspects of science and technology in such areas as trade<sup>1</sup>, education, environment, communications, and democracy, among others; to continue the proactive search for external resources; and to collaborate with other agencies, organizations and institutions in facilitating the development of scientific and technological activities in the hemisphere.

Taking into account these objectives and the aforementioned mandates and recommendations, the OST's activities will be carried out in the future in the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in support of the process to establish the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA-2005).



following areas, where it has gained considerable experience and made important achievements: policy and strategy formulation; information technologies and connectivity; technological services, including metrology, standards, accreditation and quality; biotechnology and food technologies; clean technologies and renewable energy sources. We must emphasize that the above is a very brief summary of OST's activities, and that each of the points includes a wide range of more specific topics and activities. The OST will continue to support efforts to strengthen a wide range of specialized multinational networks dealing with scientific and technological topics, including research and development groups. It will also support thematic areas such as the popularization of science and technology, and the strengthening of human resources through courses, workshops and specialized schools and other OAS co-sponsored events. These activities will be carried out in coordination and collaboration with the American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) and other responsibility centers of the Organization, as well as with national, regional and international institutions working in these areas.

Last, but not least, we present the present situation of the Office of Science and Technology, the resources at its command, and what it requires to enable it to successfully fulfill its obligations. Although there has been an increase in the activities of the OST as a result of the greater number of mandates and recommendations, the financial and human resources available to the Office have fallen significantly over time.

The OST's operating budget has shrunk considerably. By way of example, from 2001 to 2002 it fell by around 32%. The Office's present human resource situation is as follows: three senior professionals at the P5 level (one who serves as Acting Director), one senior professional at the P4 level, one P2-level professional (who also serves as administrative officer), and four general services staff (one of whom is taking early retirement, as a result of which the post will be frozen for a 9-month period). This represents a serious cutback if we compare it with the structure of the Office in 1996, when it had more than ten professionals (eight of them at the P5 level) whose positions were financed by the Regular Fund, and six office staff in general services positions.

Given that science and technology are key to the development and well-being of the populations of the region, the financial and human resources available to the Office must be commensurate with the role it is to play within the OAS in fulfilling the corresponding mandates and recommendations.

Therefore, it is important that a decision be made regarding the appointment of the Director of OST, and that the number of the OST's professionals be

increased. In the short term, at least the following is needed: one additional senior professional, to provide support in the area of scientific and technological policy; a professional specialist (level P2 or P3) to support numerous technical activities; and a professional to maintain and update the Office's web page and keep up to date the many portals it has in its server at OAS headquarters. In the medium-term (one or two years), the OST will need two more specialists.

While it is true that the Organization has been restructured and subjected to substantive changes –i.e., elimination of the Inter-American Council for Education, Science and Culture (CIECC), creation of the CIDI, creation of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), and the early retirement process for increasing the flexibility and agility of its operations– it should also be noted that the greater part of the OST's functions and activities have remained unchanged.

The OST's activities will have greater impact and be more effective if its critical mass is in line with the requirements of the Organization to fulfill its mandates in the area of science and technology, as well as in those areas in which science and technology have a role to play because of their cross-cutting nature.

# Introduction



Science is often defined as knowledge based on the systematic and orderly study of a topic or subject, such that it generates a body of information relevant to human knowledge. Technology, in turn, is the practical application of this knowledge. Accordingly, science and technology are closely linked to many disciplines and aspects of daily life, and therein lies their importance in solving many of today's problems. For example, the new knowledge-based economies stem, to a large degree, from scientific and technological advances.

To bring about economic and social development, as well as integration in the Western Hemisphere<sup>2</sup>, the countries face enormous challenges including: growing environmental contamination and climatic changes; increases in poverty indexes; population growth and the consequent shortage of food and drinking water in certain areas; different forms of corruption; the consolidation of new emerging democracies; human rights and the respect for and observance thereof; the process of globalization; implementation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as of 1 January 2005; the need for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to become more productive and environmentally responsible; and the technology gap combined with the new digital gap.

The Office of Science and Technology (OST) of the Organization of American States (OAS) has a key role to play in each of these points on the hemispheric agenda. Science and technology and their applications have improved the quality of life of the population by reducing infant mortality, developing new vaccines, increasing agricultural production, creating pest-resistant plant varieties, treating industrial waste, monitoring climate, increasing sources of employment, processing and disseminating timely, appropriate and reliable information and making it readily accessible, preparing and creating standards and patterns of measurement to facilitate trade and to boost consumer and environmental protection.

In addition, given the great differences between the countries of the hemisphere, particularly with regard to the magnitude of their economies, production systems, levels of scientific and technological development, and availability of resources, programs and projects must be established to promote horizontal cooperation among them.

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<sup>2</sup> Includes all the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean.

Since the 1967 Presidential Summit in Punta del Este, Uruguay, a clear political determination has been expressed that identifies science and technology as key instruments for progress in the region, and they must be included in integration processes to ensure adequate levels of economic and social advancement. This determination was reaffirmed during the presidential meetings of the new Summits of the Americas process, including the First Summit Meeting of the Americas (Miami, USA 1994), the Summit on Sustainable Development (Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 1996), the Second Summit of the Americas (Santiago, Chile, 1998) and the Third Summit of the Americas (Quebec, Canada, 2001)<sup>3</sup>.

In effect, several OST projects and programs were referred to explicitly at the Summits, such as the project "Hemispheric Inter-University Scientific and Technological Information Network" (RedHUCyT), the program "Common Market of Scientific and Technological Knowledge" (MERCOCYT), the Ibero-American/Inter-American Network of Science and Technology Indicators (RICYT), the Inter-American Metrology System (SIM), and the programs to popularize science and technology, to mention a few.

The Office of Science and Technology was designed to devise new actions within the scope of the Inter-American System<sup>4</sup>, particularly new approaches to policy and planning that will contribute to fulfilling the mandates and recommendations issued by the OAS's political bodies and the Summits of the Americas.

The OAS received new mandates from the Quebec Summit with regard to its role as technical secretariat of the Summits process. These mandates require a restructuring and modernization of the organization –as recognized at the last OAS General Assembly Costa Rica<sup>5</sup>. Considering the challenges this new function represents for the Organization and all its units, the Office of Science and Technology presents this Business Plan with a view to demonstrating how it can contribute to meeting these challenges.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the new Summits process, visit the following web page: <http://www.summit-americas.org/defaults.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> See Executive Order 97-1, of 29 January 1997.

<sup>5</sup> See Resolution AG/RES.1836(XXXI-O/01), numeral 2.

## Mission



The mission of the Office of Science and Technology of the OAS is to develop, foster and support activities that contribute to the advancement of science and technology in the member States; to promote their economic, social, cultural, scientific and technological integral development.

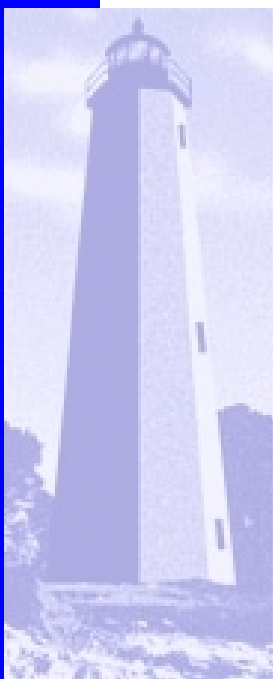
The OST can therefore be considered a facilitating mechanism for devising and developing activities that make it possible to comply with the tasks associated with the recommendations and mandates that apply to its mission.

## Objectives



The Office of Science and Technology, in collaboration with other responsibility centers in the Organization and/or other like-minded agencies, will strive to:

- ◆ Strengthen technical capabilities and programs in the Western Hemisphere;
- ◆ Advise the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General, the Executive Secretary of Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), and the governing bodies of the Organization of American States on all matters pertaining directly or indirectly to scientific and technological activities of the Organization, and to carry out their mandates as required, especially: the recommendations and mandates issued at the Presidential Summits, the meetings of ministers for science and technology, the priority areas and lines of action of the Inter-American Science and Technology Program (PRICYT), the relevant resolutions of the OAS General Assembly, the CIDI and the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCYT);
- ◆ Support the member States in the design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of scientific and technological development policies, strategies, programs and projects, especially those related to the development of institutional and information networks aimed at



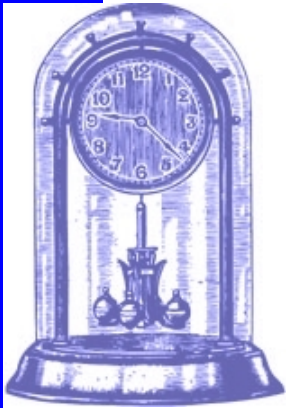
promoting scientific and technological cooperation; to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises –primary sources of employment in most Latin American and Caribbean countries– with a view to boosting productivity; promote and strengthen enterprises working with biotechnology and food technologies; and promote the use of cleaner technologies and renewable energy sources by all such enterprises;

- ◆ Carry out research and studies to examine the status and evolution of scientific and technological development in the region, and to identify and implement policies, programs and actions to promote this development;
- ◆ Coordinate with the Executive Secretariat of CIDI and the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) the identification, formulation, design and preparation of initiatives, inter-American programs and horizontal cooperation projects among the member States, promoting collective action to strengthen efforts aimed at fostering scientific and technological development, as well as evaluating projects and activities of specific nature derived from these programs. In this regard, resolution AG/RES 1807 (XXXI-O/01) of the General Assembly of San Jose, Costa Rica resolved: “to recommend to the member States to promote, with the support of the Office of Science and Technology, in coordination with the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), the preparation of multilateral projects related to the Summits mandates”;
- ◆ Support the Executive Secretariat of CIDI in organizing and coordinating ministerial fora and any other mechanisms of governmental representation in the areas of science and technology. In particular, this support will be made by providing technical secretariat services for the committees established by CIDI in the areas of science and technology. In effect, the aforementioned resolution resolved: “to instruct the General Secretariat, through the Office of Science and Technology, in coordination with the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI), to provide the necessary technical and secretariat support to the meeting”;
- ◆ Provide support as technical secretariat of MERCOCYT, COMCYT, SIM, the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC), and the Commission of Scientific and Technical Development of Central America and Panama (CTCAP);
- ◆ Continue sponsoring projects such as the Hemispheric Inter-University Scientific and Technological Information Network (RedHUCyT), the

Biotechnology and Food Technologies Project (SIMBIOSIS), the Ibero-American/Inter-American Network of Science and Technology Indicators (RICYT), and the project to support SIM;

- ◆ Support the recommendations of the Summits and the Trade Unit in establishing and operating FTAA-2005, through quantitative and qualitative measurements and tests that lead to the development of a single test to determine the quality of products and services traded;
- ◆ Assist the member States of the Organization, together with the Unit for Sustainable Development and the Environment, in efforts to foster the use of cleaner technologies and renewable energy sources, as well as the sustainable use of resources (i.e., fresh water, fisheries and wood from natural forests or plantations);
- ◆ Collaborate with other OAS responsibility centers, providing support to topics that have scientific and technological components; and
- ◆ Continue a proactive search for external resources to facilitate the implementation of projects and activities to benefit the countries of the region.

## Mandates



The principal mandates of the OST stem from the PRICYT, which is an integral part of CIDI's Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development. It takes into account the recommendations that the ministers and high-level authorities of science and technology of the hemisphere set out in the Declaration of Cartagena and its Plan of Action, at their meeting in Cartagena, Colombia in March 1996. In addition, the OST's activities are guided by mandates from the OAS General Assembly and, more specifically, from COMCYT.

These recommendations and mandates call for the use of science, technology and innovation to promote social development, the strengthening of the business sector, and protection of the environment through the use of cleaner and less contaminating technologies. This involves the development of infrastructure for communications and information technologies, connectivity, metrology infrastructure to support free trade, and the fostering of policies on science and technology for human resources development.

The OST's mandates increased as a result of the last Presidential Summit (Quebec) and the recommendations by the Heads of State and Government. These will surely be further increased at the next CIDI-sponsored hemispheric meeting of ministers and high-level authorities in science and technology, which is scheduled to take place in Panama in the first quarter of 2002.

The last OAS General Assembly (San Jose, Costa Rica, April 2001) recognized that the OST has an important role to play in fulfilling the recommendations issued at the Summit of the Americas relative to science and technology.

As a result of its achievements in recent years and the recommendations it has received, the OST has strengthened its position in the region, directing its efforts to areas where it was active in the past and that fortunately were addressed again explicitly at the last Presidential Summit (connectivity, indicators, and the popularization of science and technology), further shoring up the OST's position in the region and therefore within the OAS.

## Areas of Action and Future Activities



Taking into account the mandates from and recommendations of the Presidential Summits, the ministers and high-level authorities for science and technology, PRICYT, the General Assembly, CIDI, and COMCYT, among others, the OST will focus its activities on a variety of areas in which it has gained experience and made considerable progress in recent years.

The OST has exercised leadership and will continue to work in the following specific areas, in line with the recommendations of the Heads of State and Government: policy formulation for science and technology, information technology and connectivity, popularization of science and technology, metrology infrastructure, biotechnology and food technologies, clean technologies and renewable energy sources, among the most important. These areas, as well as MERCOCYT and science and technology indicators, have received priority attention from the OST in response to the recommendations issuing from the different Summits of the Americas. The Second Presidential Summit explicitly called for implementation of the Plan of Action adopted in Cartagena that recommended support for the aforementioned areas; the April 2001 Summit Meeting in Quebec reaffirmed this support.

Accordingly, and pursuant to its mission, the OST will pursue the following activities.

### Policy and Strategy Formulation

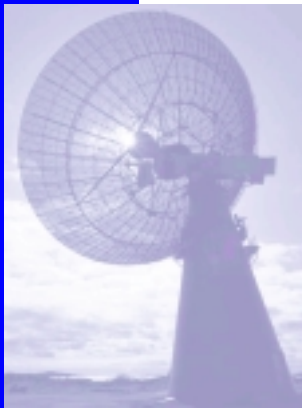


The Office will continue to be at the disposition of the OAS's various governing bodies, including the General Assembly, CIDI and its Permanent Executive Committee, CEPICIDI, COMCYT, the Non-Permanent Specialized Committee (CENPE) for Science and Technology, in order to promote technical cooperation in all matters pertaining to the formulation and implementation of policies on science and technology.

As indicated in Resolution AG/RES. 1812 (XXXI-O/01), the First Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities on Science and Technology and the Fourth Regular Meeting of COMCYT will be held in 2002. The OST will coordinate these meetings—as it has been doing to date—as technical secretariat.

In addition, the OST will continue to collaborate with MERCOCYT –a program created in 1993 during the XXIII OAS General Assembly as a multilateral instrument of the member States– and will continue to support the development and implementation of the projects of CTCAP, the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) and other regional organizations, with a view to promoting activities on science and technology in their respective countries.

## Information Technologies and Connectivity



The Third Summit of the Americas once again addressed the topic of information technologies and connectivity as key topics of the meeting. Explicitly, the governments stated that they would encourage “... the development of science and technology for regional connectivity through information and communications technologies essential for building knowledge-based societies.”

The OST was already doing pioneering and innovative work to interconnect numerous countries of the hemisphere to Internet, even before the First Presidential Summit (Miami), when the Heads of State and Government recommended that the most important universities, libraries, hospitals and government agencies be connected to networks, through the RedHUCyT of the OAS. In addition, the Latin American School of Networks (ESLARED) and other similar OST-sponsored initiatives, has provided training to hundreds of experts in the region in the area of networks and information technologies.

The experience the OST has gained in the process to interconnect, create and expand networks will contribute to achieving the objective of making the new generation of advanced Internet applications and technologies (Internet2 and Next Generation Internet –NGI–) a reality in Latin America and the Caribbean. To this end, current collaboration with the National Science Foundation, which has participated closely with OST in this area, will be increased. The OST’s leadership and experience in the region should be tapped for identifying niches for applications and encouraging the member States to work toward a more advanced level of interconnection. This initiative can be facilitated through technical assistance and a search for funding in the public and private sectors.

The OST will also continue working to consolidate topic-specific multinational networks, including the Information System on Science and

Technology (INFOCyT), SIMBIOSIS, RICyT, and the Latin American Chemistry Net (RELAq), among others

The Office will continue to support efforts with indicators undertaken by the countries of the inter-American system with the support of Spain and Portugal. Support to RICyT, a network coordinated by the University of Quilmes in Argentina with the support of the CYTED Program, was explicitly mentioned at the Quebec Summit, where the governments agreed to: “Promote, with the support of existing cooperation mechanisms, the development of the regional program of science and technology indicators.” This recommendation was ratified at the General Assembly held in San Jose, Costa Rica.

## Technological Services: Metrology, Standards, Accreditation and Quality



Projects sponsored by the OST dealing with metrology (support to SIM), standards (support for the Pan American Commission on Technical Standards) and accreditation (support to the Inter-American Cooperation on Accreditation) seek to implement a region-wide system that will facilitate exact and accurate physical and chemical measurements, and spur the development of technical infrastructure for evaluation of the goods and services traded among member States, through the mutual recognition of accreditation, inspection and testing systems, product certification and the registry of quality and environmental management systems. This effort aims to facilitate the harmonization of a metrology system that will achieve mutual recognition of a “single test” for the region to encourage an active participation of the countries in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA-2005).

The Office will continue supporting these projects, which involve most of the member States, because they contribute not only to reducing technical barriers to trade, but also to training human resources, in line with the recommendation of the last Summit of the Americas, to support “...the development of high-level human capital for the development of science and technology research and innovation that would encourage the strengthening of the agricultural, industrial, commercial and business sectors as well as the sustainability of the environment.”

In this area, the Office promotes horizontal cooperation by means of a regional approach to the matter.

In support of small-, medium- and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs), the OST works to establish and improve quality management systems in national institutions and in SMMEs in almost all the countries of the region. In this connection, it will provide support to this sector, especially in following-up on the Quebec Summit mandate to “support national efforts to strengthen rural enterprises, in particular small- and medium-sized enterprises...” and encourage, in a complementary manner, “... the training of small- and medium-sized rural entrepreneurs as well as the modernization of training institutions in this field.”

## Biotechnology and Food Technologies



The Multinational Information System Specialized in Biotechnology and Food Technology for Latin America and the Caribbean, better known by its acronym SIMBIOSIS, was created for the purpose of supporting private and public research and development institutions, as well as the business sector, by providing them with relevant information on biotechnology and food technologies.

The Office will continue supporting this initiative, seeking to increase its coverage and impact on the rational management of biodiversity and to implement the biosafety protocol in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Currently, SIMBIOSIS has a node in Belgium, in cooperation with the Biotechnology Centre. In addition, its 23 nodes in the region facilitate an active exchange among institutions, the main purpose of which is to share experiences and set the course of future activities related to the public perception of biotechnology, patents, industrial and intellectual property rights, technology transfer, and genetically modified products, among others.

## Clean Technologies and Renewable Energy Sources



Cleaner technologies, renewable energy sources, the sustainable use of natural resources, and environmental conservation have also been addressed consistently as a matter of priority at the Presidential and Ministerial Summits. The OST will continue to provide support in these areas.

The Declaration of Cartagena and its Plan of Action, to which PRICYT and the second Presidential Summit (Santiago, Chile) referred, recommended: “to promote technological cooperation among public and private companies in order to develop and use clean technologies, making more efficient use of resources and by-products, facilitating pollution control, and reducing the environmental impact caused by the dumping of waste materials, and to adopt relevant standards, such as those on total management of environmental quality.”

In addition, and consistent with the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas, agreed to at the Summit held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in 1996, the OST will continue to support the ongoing dialogue among relevant scientists and experts, the academic sector and the general public, with a view to promoting policies, practices, transfer and access to more efficient technologies, and to provide an answer to serious problems associated with global climate change, global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, the efficient use of water and energy, the sustainable use of tropical forests, sustainable production (especially on micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises in the hemisphere), among others.

The OST will support initiatives, activities, projects and programs related to:



- The promotion of the use of renewable sources of energy, such as wind, hydraulic and especially micro-hydraulic energy, energy produced by biomass, photovoltaic solar energy, and thermal solar energy, the latter not just as a source of energy, but also in applications to disinfect water and make it potable;
- The sustainable and safe use of water, both for consumption and for other purposes (agricultural, industrial, commercial, recreational, home, etc.);
- The treatment of liquid and gaseous wastes (not only from discrete sources but also from distributed sources, such as the transport of pesticides by rainwater runoff) and the final disposition and treatment of solid wastes, including reducing the generation of waste, and promoting the re-use and recycling of materials;
- The development of a sustainable forestry program (in cooperation with institutions such as the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture –IICA– and the Tropical Agriculture Research and Higher Education Center –CATIE–);

- The strengthening of SMMEs in environmental matters; and
- The clean production of goods and services.

## Cooperation with IACD, Other OAS Divisions, and Other Institutions

During the last few years, the OST has worked closely with CIDI. It also initiated a new stage of cooperation with the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), having recently reviewed and evaluated more than 40 projects on science, technology and innovation, submitted by the member States for FEMCIDI funding.

The OST considers that its support to CIDI and IACD through this activity is key for improving, developing and ensuring the selection of appropriate projects for funding. The OST is also very interested in monitoring approved science and technology projects, and recently submitted a proposal to the IACD in this regard.

The Office also collaborates regularly with the IACD Division of Human Development / Department of Information Technology for Human Development (formerly the Department of Fellowships and Training) in evaluating and selecting candidates for fellowships under the Regular Training Program (PRA fellowships) and the Special Caribbean Fellowship Program (SPECAF fellowships). OST specialists are also often involved in the selection of candidates for horizontal cooperation fellowships, for which they provide scientific and technical advice.

The OST also provides regular support and collaboration in matters related to science and technology to other areas of the OAS, including the Trade Unit, the Unit for Social Development and Education, the Inter-American Telecommunications Commission, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, the Inter-sectoral Unit for Tourism, and the Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment, among others.

In carrying out its functions, the OST works closely with numerous national, regional and international institutions. In particular, it has worked to strengthen its ties with agencies including the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (both of the United States), and the Ibero-American Program on Science and Technology (CYTED), to mention a few.



As mentioned earlier, the OST considers it a priority to engage in a proactive search for external resources to facilitate the implementation of projects and activities to benefit the countries of the region.

## Situation and Resources



Although the OST's activities have increased over the past few years, especially as a result of the important recommendations and mandates received from the Presidential and Ministerial Summits, the human and financial resources available to the Office for implementing these activities have been reduced sharply. Therefore, the OST must be strengthened in order to ensure that the Organization can fulfill the recommendations and mandates corresponding to it in the area of science and technology.

It should be noted that the OST's operating budget has been shrinking steadily. For example, from 2001 to 2002 its operating funds (excluding staff) fell by around 32%. At present, in addition to its administrative staff, the OST has three senior specialists for carrying out all the technical tasks entrusted to it: one who has also been serving as Acting Director since March 2001; one professional specialist (level P4), and one junior specialist (level P2), who also serves as administrative officer.

Since the OST serves as technical secretariat for various regional organizations (including MERCOCYT, COMCYT, CTCAP and SIM, among others), and is also responsible for coordinating and monitoring projects addressing different aspects of science and technology, it needs professionals who can provide more direct and specific support to such activities.

In addition, a professional web master is urgently needed to maintain the Office's web pages and coordinate work to update the different portals it maintains in its server at the OAS, such as RedHUCyT, COMCYT, MERCOCYT, Indicators of Science and Technology, SIMBIOSIS, SIM and IAAC, among others.

In recent years, the OST has received substantial donations from donor governments. In the area of metrology, important laboratories such as the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the United States and the National Institute of Metrology, Standards and Industrial Quality in Brazil (INMETRO) have made their installations, equipment, experts and scientists available to benefit the member States of the OAS through the project to support the Inter-American Metrology System, which is coordinated by the OST.

In addition, the OAS/GTZ project on quality management and productivity for small- and medium-sized enterprises received more than US\$4 million for the 1990-2000 period from the government of Germany, to be invested in 12



countries of the region. In the area of connectivity, the RedHUCyT also received substantial external funding, including a donation of US\$1.1 million from the United States, to facilitate the interconnection of many of the countries of the region for the first time to Internet.

Because science and technology are key to development and well-being in the region, the resources available to the Office must be in line with the role it plays in the OAS for fulfilling the recommendations and mandates that correspond to it.

Therefore, it is important that a decision be made to appoint the Director of OST and increase the number of its professionals. The latter would include, in the short term, at least one more senior professional to provide support primarily in the areas of scientific and technological policy, and one professional specialist (junior level) to provide support to numerous technical activities. In the medium term (one to two years), two more specialists will be required.

In order to be able to continue to work effectively in addressing the various recommendations and mandates issued by the political bodies of the Organization, the Summits of the Americas and the ministerial meetings, the Office of Science and Technology needs more resources, both financial and human.

Unfortunately, the Office's already dwindling number of professionals has continued to fall over the years. From 1996 to 2001 alone, the number of professionals fell from ten (eight P5-level specialists and two P4-level specialists) to five (three P5 level, one P4 level and one P2 level). Of the three P5-level specialists, one is currently serving as Acting Director. In addition, during the same period, the number of general services staff fell from six to four. One of these positions will be frozen for a nine-month period, because of the early retirement policy.

Although the Organization was restructured and underwent substantive changes in that period (including the elimination of the CIECC and the creation of the CIDI, application of the early retirement process, creation of the IACD, and the transfer of some of OST's professionals to the Agency or their retirement), most of the OST's functions and activities have remained unchanged.

In addition to the aforementioned functions, the Office has begun to work in close collaboration with the IACD, providing support and technical advice, and reviewing and evaluating multilateral projects associated with the

mandates of the Summits. The IACD has acknowledged this participation of the OST in an area that exceeds the Agency's capabilities.

The Office's experience and performance in the region are of key importance for fulfilling the recommendations and mandates mentioned throughout this document. Its capabilities can be tapped more effectively if the Office is equipped with a critical mass commensurate with the activities the OAS must support in order to comply with the mandates received not only for the areas of science and technology and, because of their cross-cutting nature, for many other disciplines as well.