



AAFA, AAPN, CCAA, SPESA, and [TC]² Announce Apparel Conference of the Americas

One Region ... One Market ... One Source

March 2006

AAFA (American Apparel & Footwear Association), **AAPN** (American Apparel Producers Network), **CCAA** (Caribbean Central American Action), **SPESA** (Sewn Products Equipment & Suppliers of the Americas), and **[TC]²** (Textile/Clothing Technology Corporation) have joined together to launch 'Apparel Conference of the Americas: **One Region ... One Market ... One Source.**' **ProNicaragua**, Nicaragua's investment promotion unit, will host an executive level conference that unites industry decision-makers from throughout the Americas with the political leadership of the region to define a common agenda designed to increase the entire region's competitiveness.

The **Apparel Conference of the Americas** will be held **June 5-7, 2006**, at the Crowne Plaza Convention Center, Managua, Nicaragua. The choice of venue recognizes the relative importance of Central America to the U.S. apparel industry and underscores the need to successfully implement DR-CAFTA in a timely manner. The goal of this high level meeting is to forge a broad-based consensus for the actions needed to insure the continued prosperity of the apparel industry, which has been a key driver for economic development in the region.

AAFA President Kevin Burke states, "If you look at the combined membership of our organizations, we have direct access to virtually every retail, brand, manufacturing, and supplier executive in the U.S. Now it's the region's turn to organize across national boundaries to become one region for our one market."

"We're veterans of the region," states AAPN Executive Director Sue Strickland. "In early 2001, AAPN opened its membership to the Western Hemisphere. Today, AAPN joins four other major U.S. organizations in a way that shatters paradigms for each of us. Now, nations in this hemisphere have the best opportunity ever to work as one region and as one source for the U.S. market."

CCAA President Federico Sacasa states, "DR-CAFTA represents a watershed opportunity for our region. By joining forces with the leading U.S.-based industry organizations, we will strengthen the private/public partnership that is needed to pursue the public policy changes required for the agreement's implementation and to insure the industry's future growth."

SPESA Executive Vice President Benton Gardner states, "Our leading organizations, representing all of the elements of the sewn products industry, are collectively committed to lead by example in organizing one major regional event that forges all of the relevant elements to create 'One Region ... One Market ... One Source.' We believe the countries in the DR-CAFTA region can come together as well."

[TC]² President Dr. Mike Fralix states, "We have all been discussing a single Central American event instead of each country doing its own thing. Since the majority of the apparel produced in the DR-CAFTA region is purchased by U.S. companies, it makes sense for the U.S. to drive the coordination of the region to the extent that it is possible. If we can partner as U.S.-based organizations to create a single event, then perhaps the region can do likewise. We all have a strong interest in the success of companies in the region. I am thrilled that we have joined forces to help make it happen."

