

U.S. COMMERCE, COALITION LAUNCH FLORIDA INITIATIVE TO OFFSET TRADE SLOWDOWN

CORAL GABLES, FL. (January 25, 2002)- The global economic slowdown in the aftermath of terrorist attacks has hit smaller companies especially hard, many of whom depend on foreign trade to survive. This reality has inspired formation of a trade coalition that will offer videoconferences to introduce Florida companies to overseas buyers. The concept will be demonstrated in a live videoconference with Madrid, Spain on January 30 at 10 A.M. at the Biltmore Hotel's Conference Center of the Americas located in Coral Gables, Florida. A 9 A.M. press conference will precede the demonstration to mark the launch of a statewide series of video events offered free to Florida exporters. The videoconference will introduce buyers of Internet/telecommunications equipment and services in Spain to selected Florida suppliers. The yearlong series offers firms throughout the state a similar opportunity to meet buyers despite the downturn in travel. Featured at the site in Spain at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid will be Telefonica, Spain's primary telecommunications provider, and other buyers and industry experts. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce, Bruce Blakeman, will lead the presentation in Miami.

Among the Florida firms to be featured are Citrix (Broward), Epik Communications (Miami-Dade), Global Resources (Palm Beach) and Bell South (Miami-Dade).

The next phase of the series will be conducted during February and March at the Miami Free Zone. This series will cover a variety of industries and countries, such as Cosmetics with Mexico and Food Products and Production Equipment with Costa Rica.

The U.S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Service and the affiliated Florida District Export Council, along with Enterprise Florida, sponsor the trade initiative along with a broad and growing coalition of public and private sector organizations, including the Miami Free Zone, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, InternetCoast, the City of Miami's International Trade Board, the Florida Foreign Trade Association, and Florida International University. At no cost to participants, the Biltmore Hotel is hosting and sponsoring this event in conjunction with Concepcion Rojas LLP of Miami, Florida, a law firm whose practice focuses on international business and technology-related matters. Comments from Florida's Consular Corps and bi-national chamber community, and by private sector firms offering their support will accompany comments by federal, state and local trade and public officials at the press conference.