



17th St. & Constitution Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
United States of America

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P. 202.458.3000
www.oas.org

INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE

CONTROL COMMISSION

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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REMARKS BY THE NEWLY ELECTED CHAIR

CH. SANTOKHI

CICAD Chair SPEECH: Ch. Santokhi

[Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. Albert Ramdin],

Outgoing Chairman of the CICAD and Assistant Secretary of State of the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the United States, Mr. David Johnson,

Executive Director of CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), Ms. Lynne Anne Williams,

Executive Secretary of CICAD, Mr. James Mack

Newly elected vice chair of CICAD, José Ramón Granero, Secretary of State, and Secretary of the SEDRONAR Program (Secretaría de Programación para la Prevención de la Drogadicción y la Lucha contra el Narcotráfico),

Delegates, international and regional organizations, members of Cicad secretariat, guests,

Fellow Commissioners and Friends,

May I start by extending my warm greetings on behalf of the Government of Suriname and the people of Suriname to you all.

Before saying anything else, let me express my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. David Johnson, the outgoing Chair, and thank him, for his leadership and his contribution to CICAD.

It is a great honour for me and my country to be elected as Cicad Chair to preside over the Cicad 48, and I hereby express my sincere thanks to you all for your support.

And I can guarantee to you that I will do my utmost within the limits of my capabilities, and with your support, which I consider indispensable, to lead Cicad and to continue with our mission, which is to strengthen the hemispheric cooperation in the fight against the drug problem.

And by electing Suriname and in particular my person as chair, we recognize this election also as a recognition of the active role played by Suriname in CICAD, especially in the MEM process, as well as its efforts, to reach out to CICAD's member states who are also members of CARICOM.

And as Chairperson, but especially as a Surinamer, as the Principal Representative of Suriname, and member of Parliament of Suriname, I can assure you, that Suriname will do everything in its power, to continue with its counter-narcotic drug strategy and its commitment to support the Hemispheric Drug Strategy and CICAD.

And hopefully we will be able to host the next conference, CICAD 49, in Suriname, so that you can enjoy firsthand the Surinamese spirit and hospitality and our policy approach to the drug problem.

With CICAD's quarter century of experience in the fight against drugs, we have not only established a comprehensive drug strategy, but also a strong cooperation mechanism with other institutions on the hemispheric and global level.

To name a few, I can mention the cooperation with the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), Interpol, the European Union (EU), but also newer regional actors, such as the Drug Council of Central America, the Drug Council of UNASUR, AMERIPOL, and IMPACS (the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security).

In this synergistic approach, the appearance and involvement of newer actors in the drug field in our hemisphere, should not be seen by CICAD as a threat to its position, as the hemispheres principal point of reference on drugs with a proven track record of expertise and experience, but more as a challenge to provide guidance to all those involved in this effort, once again based on the principle of collective efforts and shared responsibility.

And I want to call upon all these newer organizations I have just mentioned, all of which consist of CICAD member states, to supplement, and not duplicate CICAD's efforts and activities. Thus we welcome the sub-regional institutions as supporting hemispheric activities of CICAD, and I call upon them and CICAD to invite each other to their meetings as observers.

We need to consider also CICAD's position in relation to its extra-regional responsibility to coordinate the drug control activities from the Western Hemisphere with other regions, like Africa, Europe and Asia.

As we know the drug problems of all the regions in the world are inter-related, and we also know that criminal organizations of different regions are cooperating effectively.

And if we ourselves do not do the same, we will not only undermine our efforts to respond to this threat, but also send the wrong signal to the world community on how we tackle the world drug problem.

CICAD has now completed 5 rounds of evaluations. Now, the lessons learned and best practices of the past decade, need to be clearly identified.

Our CICAD is entering a new era, and this brings us to another discussion that we should not avoid. We have approved the new Hemispheric Drug Strategy. We are in the process of producing an action plan for member state approval.

So my question to you is this. Can CICAD still properly fulfill its role and mission with a statute and regulations that were last updated almost 15 years ago?

Or should we take a closer look at this? I believe that it is crucial, that CICAD take a stronger role in leading and coordinating the hemispheric strategy in a spirit of camaraderie towards other regional and sub-regional organizations, that also deal with drug issues.

I think we need to prepare CICAD for that role by reinforcing its internal organization.

As regards the financial position of CICAD, we should recognize that a weak financial position will lead to an inadequate implementation of CICAD policies, as well as of its mission and strategy.

And based again on the principle of shared responsibility, I believe we need to rethink our responsibilities, as members, to ensure the long term strength and financial well being of our organization.

For that reason I am calling on this Commission, with the help of its secretariat, to design a voluntary annual financial contribution- regime based on the financial capacity of each state.

And I implore the non-member state and donor organizations to continue with their financial support to CICAD.

As you must have noticed the agenda of this 48th CICAD Session is well-balanced in terms of policies and geography. This is something we always should encourage to exemplify the importance of hemispheric cooperation and the spirit of our hemispheric strategy.

A special topic on the agenda of the 48th CICAD session will focus on Caribbean security policy. The Caribbean is very often called a transit region, situated as it is, between North and South America, and at the gateway between Western Hemisphere and Africa and Europe. The Caribbean is a region that is much affected by threats in other regions as well as by natural disasters.

And speaking candidly, the Caribbean region has not always been able to respond effectively and timely to these threats and natural disasters.

And as we know, all security threats, including the drug threat, are inter-related. For that reason control measures need to be approached in a comprehensive, integrated, structural and strategic manner, based on a strategy that incorporates measures aimed at addressing these threats.

Drug threats that affect all sectors and levels of a community should be addressed from several perspectives and angles.

Based on the important developments I have outlined, above - our new hemispheric drug strategy, our plan of action soon to be completed, the new vision, the reorganization of CICAD, and our considerations on the future of CICAD - may I suggest that CICAD consider organizing a special CICAD meeting at the highest possible political level on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary.

Let us consider establishing a CICAD working group to discuss the organization of the commemoration of this important milestone.

To my Caribbean friends I want to say that Suriname as a Caribbean Nation, and I as a CARICOM national, are proud to be elected as the second Caribbean Nation to chair CICAD.

Suriname offers to use its position as a bridge between the Caribbean to the Latin American countries and to strengthen its participation in and commitment to CICAD. And I wish to emphasize that the drug problem in the Caribbean can be controlled effectively only when there is a strong and effective cooperation between our Caribbean nations and the Latin American and North American nations.

Our different languages, culture and history should not create divisions between us. On the contrary, we should close ranks in the face of the common threat posed by the drug problem, and strengthen our collective efforts to address this threat.

In this regard I wish to send a special word of appreciation to the representative of Haiti for his presence and for his contribution in the CICAD activities.

I also wish to state that we as CICAD sympathize with the adversities that Haiti has been facing since January. We wish our Haitian friends all the strength and blessings of our Almighty in this process of recovery.

Finally, to our Latin American *amigos*, North American friends, and all Caribbean neighbors, we are again gathered here to continue with our mission and to accomplish our objectives for this session, I

take the opportunity to thank you all for your commitment, dedication, efforts, and wish you all a fruitful session.

I thank you!