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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Organization of American States

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www.oas.org

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

**FORTY-EIGHTH REGULAR SESSION
December 6 - 8 , 2010
Washington, D.C.**

**OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.48
CICAD/doc.1852/10
7 December 2010
Original: English**

**WELCOME REMARKS
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Remarks

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Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Remarks at CICAD 48 Meeting

Washington, DC

December 6, 2010

Commissioners, Assistant Secretary General Ramdin and friends:

Looking at our program, I am particularly pleased that Assistant Secretary General Ramdin has also joined us and we look forward to his remarks. We also look forward to hearing from OAS Secretary General Insulza later on.

During this meeting we have a great deal of ground to cover in a short period of time.

Among the important topics we will discuss over the next few days is the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). We will hear remarks by speakers from both CARICOM and the United States. CBSI was created to address the broad range of security threats to this region. But it is only one tool. We here must use the full range of mechanisms we have at our disposal to overcome the full range of challenges that are unique to the Caribbean.

During the course of CICAD 48, we will also hear from academics and other experts who are working to improve the training and professionalism of workers engaged in all aspects of drug awareness, demand reduction and the various phases of drug treatment. As you know, this is an area where shared best practices, model programs, and other information-sharing between states and around the region have proved extremely fruitful.

A central goal of this meeting is to approve the 33 Country Reports on drug control progress that were developed in the 5th Round of our peer-review Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). This peer review program has proven to be effective and successful. It has brought us together to address drug problems. Better than ever before, we understand that no society is immune to the threat of drugs and that no one can effectively confront the threat alone. It is a testament to the

success of this program that states in other regions are now looking at this process as a possible model to emulate.

Even so, it is generally agreed that, after 10 years of operation, the program needs to be updated to reflect changing trends as well as decisions and initiatives by the Commission itself. For example, we must make certain that the questionnaire and its future recommendations are in line with our new hemispheric drug strategy as well as the CICAD Plan of Action. As the outgoing Commission Chair, I pledge that the United States will work closely with like-minded countries to provide clear guidelines from Commissioners to the CICAD Inter-Governmental Working Group (IWG) how best to begin updating the MEM in preparation for next Round.

As a group we have come a long way in recent decades. Just 25 or 30 years ago many world leaders dismissed the threat of drug production, trafficking and use. In retrospect, I believe the 1988 U.N. Convention was a turning point for all of us. Since then, like other CICAD countries, the United States has adopted narcotics control as a national priority.

For our part of the world, the CICAD Commission allows us to work jointly, as neighbors, to protect our citizens' health and safety. With our new Drug Strategy for the Hemisphere – approved last year by the OAS General Assembly – we established the updated and flexible framework to confront this ever-evolving problem. I would like to thank Brazil, again, for its leadership in making this updated framework a reality. Now, under Mexico's leadership, we must act quickly to complete our CICAD Plan of Action so the Commissioners at CICAD 49 can adopt and approve it. This Plan will serve as the tangible roadmap that our countries and the Executive Secretariat will use to implement measurable actions to promote counternarcotics institution building, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures and international cooperation.

Increased focus on demand reduction and treatment has been the hallmark of the United States' updated drug control policies. Similarly, drug awareness and treatment themes have also been central to the Commission during my tenure as Chair. Our Plan of Action, when approved, will re-enforce the overarching commitment of our countries significantly to reduce drug consumption. Years of practical experience and scientific research have made increasingly clear that drug abuse, no matter what else it involves, is at its core a health issue and must be treated as such. Indeed, through Commission initiatives, addiction treatment is increasingly addressed in the

context of multiple steps along a continuum of care involving mainstream medicine, short-term stabilization and other community and self-help initiatives which ultimately lead to sustained recovery.

We look to our Experts Group on Demand Reduction to help set the modern standards we need in this area. I know that David Mineta, the Deputy Director for Demand Reduction at the U.S. Office of Drug Control Policy, is looking forward to deepening his association with this group as the newly nominated chair of that group.

At the same time, drug trafficking and the associated corruption and other related crime will continue to require a tougher approach. This means our governments must work at home and cooperatively abroad to identify, prosecute and imprison drug and related crime leaders, seize their assets, and disrupt and destroy their organizations. There is no way around this. We must continue to work urgently -- individually as member states and collectively -- in common cause. This requires us to use all the tools available to us, including the work of the various CICAD Experts Groups. Significant pending projects under the auspices of the CICAD Experts Groups include, for example, model legislation to prosecute smugglers who use self-propelled semi-submersibles, regulations for the hemisphere in the area of chemical controls, and initiatives aimed at better utilization of asset forfeiture to attack and destabilize drug traffickers. There is much to be done in the area of law enforcement but we have come a long way in our efforts to work together.

In closing, I commend to you our new chair (when his election is official), Chan Santokhi. All of us here are familiar with Mr. Santokhi's strong reputation as a counter narcotics and crime expert, activist and hemispheric leader in these fields. We are sure that, under his guidance, the Commission will continue its vigorous work and to press ahead in developing an effective Plan of Action to carry us through the next decade. To friends around the table, thank you again for the honor of serving as CICAD chair. This Commission has touched all of our countries and our citizens in many practical and positive ways.

Thank you.