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United States of America

**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Organization of American States

P. 202.458.3000
www.oas.org

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

**FORTY-NINTH REGULAR SESSION
May 4 - 6, 2011
Paramaribo, Suriname**

**OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.49
CICAD/doc.1886/11
4 May 2011
Original: English**

**REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR ALBERT RAMDIN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL**

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES



Remarks by

**Ambassador Albert Ramdin
Assistant Secretary General**

**At the inaugural session of
the forty-ninth regular session of the
Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)**

**Wednesday, May 4, 2011
Paramaribo, Suriname**

Your Excellency Robert Ameerali, Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname,
Honorable Chandrikapersad Santokhi, Chairman of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
of the Organization of American States,
Secretary of State Dr. José Ramón Granero,
Secretary of SEDRONAR in Argentina, and Vice Chair of CICAD,
Distinguished delegates,
Ambassador Adam Blackwell, Secretary for Multidimensional Security,
Ambassador James Mack, Executive Secretary of CICAD,
Members of the Corps Diplomatique,
Colleagues from the OAS,
Specially invited guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this forty-ninth regular session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). I thank the Government of Suriname for hosting this meeting and for the hospitality extended to me and delegates since we arrived in this country. Given the financial realities and the cost involved in hosting meetings and conferences of this nature, the OAS further recognizes the efforts of member states such as Suriname. Through its Chairmanship of CICAD, Suriname has continued its commitment to the fight against organized crime and drug trafficking.

Every day through the media and even first hand, we witness examples of how the drug trade has poisoned our societies, distorted our economies and threatened the security and well being of our youth. Crime and violence have become one of the most pressing social and governance challenges facing citizens of the hemisphere.

Drug trafficking is a multifaceted problem which has increased in scope and gravity over the last few decades. There is a direct link between illegal drugs and crimes of violence, sex crimes, domestic violence, child abuse, corruption and other evils. All of these have had a direct impact on national security agendas in the hemisphere, and a more direct economic impact on smaller and vulnerable economies, like those in the Caribbean and Central America.

Countries in our region share common challenges including inadequately patrolled coastlines, unmanned airstrips, under-resourced law enforcement and security agencies, deficiencies in forensic capacity, cyber and electronic crimes. Insecurity has no boundaries and no country acting alone is capable of fully combating the consequences of organized crime, drug trafficking and consumption. Success in this endeavor calls for a coordinated, multilateral approach to the application of resources by and among states and regional and international organizations. National security is deeply linked to global security, and the growing prevalence and severity of these crimes cannot be left unchecked.

All stakeholders stand to benefit from the sharing of information, coordination of actions and the development of new mechanisms to confront the challenges of the trade. All countries also stand to benefit from supporting neighbors who do not have the means to effectively counteract the threat posed by international organized crime and drug trafficking. It is therefore in the interest of ALL in the Americas to limit or eliminate destabilizing forces that can threaten stability, peace, prosperity and security.

The reality for the Western Hemisphere is that these threats have rapidly changed traditional regional and global priorities. Therefore I believe the greatest test of global leadership in the 21st Century will be defined by the ability of leaders to work collectively to meet the challenges of this new security agenda.

The OAS General Assembly which begins in El Salvador on June 5 this year has as its theme “Citizen Security in the Americas”. According to the new OAS Hemispheric Observatory on Citizen Security, over 130,000 people were murdered in the Americas, and more than two-thirds of all kidnappings on the planet take place in the Western Hemisphere. According to a 2010 Latinobarómetro report on public attitudes and perceptions, a lack of security and personal safety in many of our member states ranks very high on the list of citizen concerns. The surveys show that in countries where citizens perceive that security is weak, they are less satisfied with the judiciary, the police and government institutions in general.

Our responses to crime and violence need to be long-term actions to address underlying causes. We need an integrated approach to address the root of the problem. More arrests, more prisons and longer jail sentences are not solving – and will not solve--the problems. Of course, strengthening the court systems, and giving more training to the police is very important. But in the long run, I believe our priority should be to invest more in education, training and health care systems, specifically mental health and the treatment of drug-dependence.

We also need to create more jobs and specialized skills training. We need to provide a better alternative and more available alternative to a life of drugs and crime. Our citizen security strategy should build up existing Government institutions and social programs and enlist labor unions, the universities, and the private sector in promoting a culture of non-violence, and in creating new opportunities, particularly for young people.

Traditional security threats have been met by force, arms and armies. Modern day security threats must now be met with a degree of strategic persuasion and influence through broader alliances. Change can only come through political will, collaboration and coordination among countries.

It is no secret that a deteriorating security situation can undermine democracy. In our fight against crime and violence however, it is crucial that our responses fully respect and honor human rights. The new CICAD Hemispheric Drug Strategy begins by framing actions against drug trafficking and abuse in the context of respect for universal human rights.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Report entitled "Citizen Security and Human Rights" states, among other things, that in the name citizen security, authorities may not use illegal or arbitrary force or detention, may not violate due process, and may not charge adolescents as adults when accused of criminal offenses. The State therefore has a duty to guarantee the right to a fair trial and adequate legal representation. It also has a duty to provide fair and humane treatment to incarcerated persons, to patients in the health care system, including drug-dependent and mentally-ill persons, and to victims of crime and violence.

As I close I urge this meeting to undertake a comprehensive analysis of all the mechanisms currently in place to deal with these challenges, and examine how more effective collaboration can be achieved. I urge delegates to take this debate back home with you, so that you can generate the kind of public consultation and participation that will be needed if we are to reverse the tide of crime and violence in our countries. I also take this opportunity to recognize the Executive Secretary of CICAD Mr. James Mack for his leadership, support and commitment to this issue.

I wish us all fruitful and meaningful deliberations over the next few days.

I thank you.