



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

**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Organization of American States

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Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF CICAD, MR. RAFAEL BIELSA

Inaugural Address of the 51st Regular Session of CICAD

Ms. Dir. of OPS

Mr. Sec. Gen. of the OAS

Official Representatives

Invited guests

Permanent representatives to the OAS

Delegates

Mr. Secretary of Multidimensional Security

Staff of the secretariat

Ladies and Gentlemen

As President of this Commission, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 51st Regular Session with the hope that our results from this meeting will be fruitful, to better the day-to-day work we perform in each of our countries in response to the global drug problem and its many manifestations.

Just a few short months ago at the 50th Regular Session of CICAD, where the Republic of Argentina had the honor of assuming the Presidency of this Commission, we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of this important multilateral agency with the slogan to “look towards the future”. The future is now, and today we are charged with the urgent need to recognize that this is a pivotal moment to address the world drug problem; many in our region have raised their voices in a critical reflection of the successes and failures of the strategies and actions that have come to fruition.

In this regard, and as has been recognized by the international community, after more than a decade of commitments made by the General Assembly of the United Nations to address the world drug problem, the problem remains a challenge plagued by more failures than successes. The efforts and progress made by States, competent international organizations, and civil society in

these areas have been many, but remain insufficient. The goals set by States in 1998 in both the areas of supply reduction and demand reduction are still both far from being achieved.

During the recent VI Summit of the Americas that took place a few days ago in Cartagena de Indias, the heads of state agreed on the need to analyze the results of current policies and explore new approaches to the subject. This mandate was conferred to the Organization of American States to analyze the results of current drug policies of the hemisphere with a focus on their successes and future challenges, and to explore options and scenarios for the development of new approaches to drug policy.

This debate is not only necessary, but it also forces us to face the challenge of enriching the debate by not just reiterating old antinomies and dichotomies, which will only cause wasted time in sterile discussions. We have an obligation to rethink the path we have been following and to promote the changes necessary to find a more effective approach to the problem.

This mandate was conferred to the organization by our heads of state because of its importance and ability to provide guidance. Although the mandate exceeds the scope of this session, I invite you to work on each one of the items on our agenda in keeping with a thoughtful and open spirit.

Over the next few days we will address key issues affecting our countries by reflecting on the drug situation in our hemisphere, the impact of drug trafficking on economic development, the problem of security and drugs particularly in the regions of the Caribbean and Central America, the spread of heroin use in some areas of our hemisphere, and the problem of smokeable cocaine in South America. We will also analyze the importance of national policies to be evidence-based and the importance of civil society contributions to the design and implementation of drug related policies.

We will also dedicate our time to discussing the best way to revitalize and invigorate the function of this Commission as a hemispheric political forum to confront the world drug problem, to adjust the current work of the expert groups, to analyze and approve the work plan of the Executive

Secretariat, and to deepen the guidelines we have established for the ongoing review process of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism. We will also have specific forums to review the work that was started at the VI Summit of the Americas and to discuss the current trends in drug policies.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is undeniable that the most appropriate and effective response to this crossroads must come from the hand of an open, thoughtful, and unbiased debate, and from a dynamic and multidisciplinary perspective of evidence-based policies to best address these concerning problems.

A very short time ago we approved a new Hemispheric Drug Strategy and a new Plan of Action, and mandated that the process of revising the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism should be structured from these new agreements in the areas of institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, and international cooperation. Even in so much as the titles of these instruments and the language used, there is a clear improvement over those of the past.

Recognizing the importance and the validity of these recent consensus I must insist that the reflection demanded of us be even more profound, because it is rooted in the foundation of each of these strategies and actions. It is a reflection that obligates us maintain the path of efficiency, and to rethink the others. In the open, thoughtful, and unbiased debate we propose, we must navigate in search of a stable balance that will allows us to leverage the successes achieved and bravely face the re-design of policies that, no doubt, have proven to be ineffective.

I hope this spirit remains embedded in the way in which we approach each of the issues of the agenda during the Fifty-first Regular Session.

I reiterate my warmest welcome.

Thank you.