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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE**

**CONTROL COMMISSION**

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Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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**WORDS OF ADAM BLACKWELL AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE 52<sup>ND</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE CICAD**

## **WORDS OF ADAM BLACKWELL AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE 52<sup>ND</sup> REGULAR SESSION OF THE CICAD**

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of Costa Rica for its effort to accommodate and organize this session of the CICAD and by its hospitality; which reinforces the attention that the Government gives to security related problems. Many thanks to you Mrs. President Chinchilla.

These sessions present a motivating and interesting agenda. Allow me to highlight some of these topics.

First, the process of preparing the Report on the Drug Problem in the Americas, commissioned by the Summit of the Americas; second, an issue of transnational organized crime, which strongly affects Central America; third, the increase in actions for the reduction of the demand to contain drug trafficking and, finally, the new national approaches to regulating drugs which is a very healthy discussion in the Commission.

The leaders gathered at the Sixth Summit of the Americas commissioned the preparation of a report to the OAS to assess the policies and experiences regarding drugs and to provide new alternatives. That would have been an impossible task without the support of Member States and of various international organizations and the private sector. Our thanks to all of them

Based on the experience of the CICAD, we organize a working group to meet the presidential mandate. This is an important group of experts from the American Continent that will enable us to offer a response to the leaders through a vast and representative vision.

One of the lessons that we can already draw from the report is that the answer to the problem of drugs should be comprehensive. It is not solely the responsibility of a ministry or agency, but that of many ministries and agencies. It is a task that involves health, education, and urban planning as well as public safety agencies. It is a task that demands the efforts of the private sector and of the civil society together with those of the State. Tomorrow, I will present to the Costa Rican authorities an evaluation of the security system of the country that we created based on this approach. We are confident that it may be useful for future work.

We will also use this meeting to talk to some of you to obtain materials for the Report and tomorrow we will be able to share your their impressions with the Secretary-General on the progress of this process

We are aware that our leaders expect a critical, renewed and fresh view on these issues, as evidenced by the request made only weeks ago by President Chinchilla and by other leaders of the region relating to the regulation of the marijuana market.

On a different note, I would like to thank the outstanding analysis that will be carried out on Organized Crime.

This is not a new topic, since the declaration of hemispheric security is 10 years old and OAS is responding to it. However, this is a challenge that tends to overcome our strength as it acts across borders as the most efficient business with a wide diversity of activities and without any of the legal limitations a legitimate business has.

For this reason, at the Secretariat of Multidimensional Security we are making an effort to ensure that the problem of organized crime, which includes drug trafficking, is tackled from a systemic and systematic perspective because we have no doubt that all security problems, including this one, are part of a single situation in which each of the parts affects the other. The repression of organized crime cannot be displayed nor addressed if it is not together with the elaboration of appropriate laws, with the consideration of effective systems of prevention, with the development and implementation of new methods and effective rehabilitation and social reintegration and with a vigorous policy of assistance to the victims. This is the security system that we want to strengthen and we are working on it with dedication.

Moreover, we speak of a systemic perspective because security issues have to be addressed on the basis of consistent evidence and accurate evaluations to measure our progress and setbacks

Let me share with you just one fact, a sample of what tackling this problem in a systematic way can be, based on the evidence.

As you all know, the deaths attributed to the consumption of illicit drug overdose are raised in the Americas, according to the Pan-American Health Organization, to 8,794 cases. These data are from 2004 so I apologize, but these are the latest global data available. This figure contrasts with the one offered by the Secretary of Defense of the United States, Mr. Leon Panetta, who, in the first Trilateral Meeting of Ministers of Defense of North America, held on March 27 of this year and citing official Mexican sources, announced that 150,000 people die each year in the Americas as a result of the war against organized crime related to drug trafficking. That figure was confirmed later on by the Government of Mexico in an official statement.

In sum, drug-related deaths as a health problem would represent less than 6% of the deaths associated with drugs as legal and law enforcement problems. This evidence should lead us to ask ourselves where the drug problem actually is and where we must put the accent when we try to fix it. I am aware that I am comparing probably figures that correspond to different years. Yet we all know that the ratio between them does not differ substantively if they correspond to a single year.

There can be no doubt; therefore, that organized crime associated with the drug problem is not only more lethal than illicit drugs as a health problem, but it is also the main source of violent deaths in our continent.

The leaders of the Americas have not kept outside of this reality and at the Sixth Summit of the Americas, along with ordering the report I already referred to, they decided to conduct a consultation system aimed at the creation, in the course of the year, of a hemispheric schema against Transnational Organized Crime.

Today, I can remind you with satisfaction that this trust has been fulfilled and that as a result of these consultations, the "Commitment of Chapultepec" was signed last September to promote the creation of a hemispheric schema based on two pillars. An operational one, whose constitution is taking place these same days in Mexico thanks to the generosity of the Mexican State, and a political one which shall be constituted by the OAS in the coming months.

As you can see, the States of the Americas have not been idly against the threat of organized crime and sooner or later they shall impose on it.

Another topic that I wanted to share with you is the significant increase of efforts and activities in the field of demand reduction that is taking place in our countries. This increase balances other, equally important, efforts and activities focused on the implementation of the law.

I am convinced that this balance is the best way. The vicious cycle of insecurity, violence and drugs shall not be discontinued if new viewpoints such as those provided by the hemispheric strategy are not incorporated, including citizens as center of actions by the government or those regulated by the State.

What I just said can only be translated in practice into stronger health systems and with services that are carefully provided or regulated by the State. A system of demand reduction that includes activities that start with prevention, continue with education, include the development of environments to eliminate or at least reduce social exclusion, and continue with systems of care for addicts to end up with a network that would allow a former addict to be effectively integrated. This system of demand reduction is in perfect harmony with our multidimensional concept of security and that's why we are supporting it. The last topic I wanted to refer to has to do with some new national initiatives in drug control, such as those in Uruguay and Argentina. Their inclusion is a sign of maturity and responsibility of the CICAD. I believe we cannot but feel encouraged by the fact that two countries are going to present on these topics in this fifty-second regular session, as it happened precisely 10 years ago, in Ottawa, Canada when the changes proposed at that time by that country were submitted to this Committee.

I remember my first contact with the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, when we were discussing the possible implementation of a Drug Treatment Court and doubted that the society was ready for it. Yet less than two years after that, Trinidad and Tobago were already carrying out a pilot experience in this field. Something similar happened in El Salvador in relation to the effort of public security associated with the so-called "truce" between the Maras, which the General Secretariat of the OAS has stimulated without reservations: the community then is skeptical with regard to its outcome. However nearly nine months have passed and the truce works, with the effect of a very significant reduction in violence in the country.

For this reason we must persevere in the pursuit of new ways, with daring solutions. Particularly, we must feel safe and confident that for the OAS there are no topics that have not been freely discussed and that, with realism and objectivity, all of them will be addressed in the search for effective and realistic solutions to our problem.

I have already mentioned how important the systemic and comprehensive effort is within countries. I would like to add that an integrating effort is equally important at an international level. Perhaps, it is even more important because we are living in an interconnected world in which we know that everything we do in one place has almost immediate effects in another. That is why harmonizing efforts among countries is so important and this meeting of the CICAD is an excellent demonstration of it. I am not talking about the meeting itself, nor of the capacities; which are many, of the outstanding staff of the OAS. I am speaking primarily about the multiplier effect of the working groups of the networks of experts, such as the one we are all part of by participating in this meeting. We must be aware that for a group like ours, with the dedication and passion that we can put into this work, everything is possible.

There is no room to doubt that the task is large. There is no doubt that among us there will be differences in how to deal with this or that matter. But there can be no doubt that we all want to end

with a shameful situation of addictions, crime, and economic costs that only hurts the peoples of the Americas.

I reiterate my gratitude to the Government and people of Costa Rica, as I stated at the beginning of my speech. They have hosted us with the splendid generosity we have become accustomed to. And to you, I wish you a good job and even better results.

Thank you very much.