



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

Organization of American States

P. 202.458.3000
www.oas.org

INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

FIFTY-SIXTH REGULAR SESSION
November 19 - 21, 2014
Guatemala

OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.56
CICAD/doc.2159/14
21 November 2014
Original: English

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT RAMDIN

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL, ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Speaking Notes for Ambassador Albert Ramdin,

56th Regular Session of CICAD

Protocol/Salutations (to be updated once in Guatemala)

May I first thank the Government of Guatemala for hosting this meeting, and for the hospitality extended to myself and all delegates since we arrived.

I would like to congratulate the Government of Colombia for the past year of achievements under the Colombian Chair of CICAD, particularly with regards to the initiative to create a working group to analyze and generate proposed alternatives to incarceration. This initiative is central to ensuring the well-being of individuals and communities and reducing overcrowding in prisons, and merits continued efforts. I understand that a preliminary report will be presented tomorrow, and I look forward to the outcome of the discussions on this topic.

May I also extend my congratulations to Guatemala and Peru for being elected Chair and Vice Chair respectively of the CICAD Commission.

I am honoured to be back in Guatemala, after the country hosted a successful and dynamic forth-sixth Special Session of the General Assembly on the drug issue, in September of this year, delivering a valuable instrument – the Guatemala Resolution – which will serve as a multilateral set of guidelines for member states in the drafting of comprehensive policies to address the world drug problem. The Special Session was an important forum for a recommitment to a hemispheric response to the drug problem.

I would also like to commend the creative initiative to bring our young people into the discussion through “The Voice of the Youth of the Americas: Preventing and Reducing the Harm caused by Drugs” contest. It was an excellent opportunity for the youth in our Hemisphere to offer a fresh and new approach to all our members states, as well as presenting valuable inputs for possible future projects.

I last had the pleasure of addressing CICAD Commissioners in 2011 in Paramaribo, Suriname at the 49th regular session of the Commission. At that time, Commissioners approved the Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2011-2015, which has since provided member states with a reference guide for the implementation of national projects and programs within the framework of the Hemispheric Drug Strategy. As you are aware, it was agreed that the Plan would be reviewed and updated at the end of the five year period, which is a task that lies ahead for CICAD in 2015 as has been discussed earlier today.

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission will be celebrating its 30th anniversary of its founding in 2016. CICAD has been a respected and effective institution for over 28 years. But what does the future hold and what does this organization need to do to remain effective and as relevant as it is today? The report on The Drug Problem in the Americas was a pivotal piece of work and it has served not only to provide a clear picture of the current issues, but it has opened an appropriate and timely dialogue on the issues that this Hemisphere must face in the coming years.

As you, our Member States, work over the coming months to develop the 2016 to 2020 Plan of Action of the Hemispheric Strategy on Drugs, there are several issues that I encourage you to take into account:

The policies and actions adopted by the Hemisphere must be people-focused and have the improvement of society as their ultimate goal. At the same time, we must remain cognizant of the fact that even with the best intentions, some actions will have unintended harmful consequences. We must, therefore, continue to pay attention to the most vulnerable persons in our societies and ensure that our actions do not disadvantage them or make their situations worse.

In addition, our policies should not unfairly target and disadvantage one group of persons over another. Recent efforts, such as the introduction of Drug Treatment Courts in some of our member states or as I recently mentioned, efforts to develop other alternatives to incarceration, can only redound to the benefit of persons who need services that ultimately address the root causes of their infringement on the law.

Understand your environment. It certainly is not static and your plans must be forward-looking in their scope while at the same time holding on to the collective traditional values of this hemisphere and the main pillars upon which the OAS is built; namely democracy, human rights, security, and development.

Treat the issue of drugs with the seriousness that you have always espoused in this CICAD forum. Drugs continue to affect the health and safety of persons whether they are producers, traffickers, consumers, law enforcement officers or innocent bystanders. Most importantly, young people are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of drugs and you must do all that you can to ensure that these persons who represent our future are protected. As called for in the Guatemala Resolution, we need to invest in the specific needs of children, adolescents and youth – both in and out of school – with an emphasis on education and training to develop skills and opportunities that enable them to pursue a healthy lifestyle.

Your Plan of Action must take into account the current situation that we as a hemisphere are facing as well as considering future situations that we may face. Actions must have a solid base, and that base must be the best available evidence that exists about the multiple issues your plan will aim to address. Given the resource challenges that many of the countries in our hemisphere face, it is imperative that policies and actions are based on evidence that is valid and reliable. Our actions need to be targeted and focused on the problems that actually exist and not on issues that we *only imagine* exist. It is important that we be efficient and effective, and we owe it not only to our donors, but to the people in our countries that we are trying to help. We must continue to support appropriate scientific research and the collection of data to inform our planning, implementation and evaluations.

Your plans should include a range of options that allow countries with distinctive issues and with different levels of development and resource availability to tackle their problems in a way that addresses their situations. As we recognize the complexity of issues associated with the global drug problem, a menu of options will always work better than a one size fits all approach and it is clear, as shown in the

Report on the Drug Problem in the Americas, that the 'drug problem' is not a single homogeneous issue for our member states.

You need to measure your effectiveness. How well have you implemented the 2011 to 2015 Plan of Action? What were your outcomes? And what mechanisms are in place to ensure that you are able to take these measurements as accurately as possible?

The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism has evolved over the past decade and a half to become a model on how a group of countries can collectively measure their progress on drug control. This mechanism has served the hemisphere well and is one that other regions should emulate, but it cannot be allowed to become static and, similar to the changes in your Plan of Action, this too must be constantly updated so that it remains relevant.

Honourable delegates, in closing, I wish you fruitful and meaning deliberations over the next three days, and encourage you to continue to work within the framework of a multifaceted approach that recognizes the humanity, health, human rights and dignity of the victims of the drug problem in our Hemisphere.