



OAS | CICAD



**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE
CONTROL COMMISSION**

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

**SIXTY-SEVENTH REGULAR SESSION OF CICAD (VIRTUAL SESSION)
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**AMB. ADAM NAMM
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, CICAD/OAS
OPENING REMARKS FOR CICAD 67**

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Friday, 17 July 2020

Good morning.

Sasha Kasanof, Director of the Office of Global Programs and Policy, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, United States Department of State, current CICAD Chair;

Farah Urrutia, Secretary for Multidimensional Security of the Organization of American States;

Honorable CICAD Commissioners, representatives from missions to the OAS, and other representatives from our member states, CICAD Executive Secretariat colleagues;

It is a pleasure to be with you, albeit virtually, at this 67th regular session of CICAD. I hope all of you, your families, and colleagues are well.

As agreed to by member states at CICAD's 66th regular session last November in Miami, CICAD 67 was to have been the first "spring" regular session – and I refer to spring in the Northern Hemisphere – that would be a one-day, mission-based, in-person meeting, the dual purpose of which would be for countries to approve language for inclusion in the draft General Assembly resolution on security, and to approve the CICAD annual report for the previous calendar year. While

the purpose of the meeting has not changed, we are obviously conducting this meeting via a virtual platform rather than in person, and welcome many CICAD commissioners in addition to mission representatives. I also note that, rather than in the spring, we are holding this meeting in the middle of summer in the Northern Hemisphere, which is, of course, due to disruption caused by the pandemic.

I want to add that just yesterday I received a letter from several civil society organizations, who expressed their dismay that civil society was not included in this regular session. I and my colleagues in the CICAD Executive Secretariat consider the participation of civil society greatly important, and I note we have included civil society in the majority of the virtual events we have held since the onset of the pandemic.

However, the virtual nature of this session due to the pandemic, as well as the changed format of the spring meeting as agreed to at CICAD 66, provide for a very short timeframe to achieve the necessary approval of the two documents on the agenda, rather than allow for panels, discussions, and the customary interventions from civil society organizations, international organizations, and OAS Permanent Observer countries. My recommendation is that the topic of including Permanent Observer countries, international organization, and civil society in future spring regular sessions be discussed at CICAD 68 later this year.

As all of you, we in the CICAD Executive Secretariat have been working diligently for the past several months not only to understand the effect that COVID-19 has had on our countries, and possible long-term

consequences, but, more importantly, to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the drug problem in the Western Hemisphere. A recent CICAD survey of OAS member states shows that drug consumption and dependence is likely on the increase due to social isolation, with drug treatment services sadly reduced because of restrictions on face-to-face contact. That is an unfortunate and perilous combination, and makes our efforts all the more important.

CICAD also conducted a survey of OAS member states on how narcotrafficking has been affected by the pandemic. The responses indicate that, not surprisingly, criminal drug traffickers are taking advantage of current national and global vulnerabilities. Although some trafficking has been disrupted by the pandemic, drug control authorities are experiencing significant difficulties in performing their duties because a sizeable amount of their personnel and financial resources have been reallocated to security and humanitarian tasks related to the pandemic. Additionally, drug trafficking by commercial aircraft – whether via courier or in baggage -- has been drastically reduced, but criminal organizations continue to use cargo planes and small private planes operating from clandestine airstrips to traffic significant amounts of illicit drugs, mostly cocaine, to consumer markets within the Americas and elsewhere. Drug traffickers also increasingly employ submarines and semi-submersible vessels.

Beyond important data gleaned from the surveys I just mentioned, allow me to share some of the other ways CICAD is helping OAS member states to address the drug problem during the pandemic:

-- We issued a paper entitled, "COVID-19 and the Treatment of Substance Use Disorders," which provides guidance on treatment strategies during the pandemic. This paper was the result of a joint effort with Colombia and Paraguay -- the Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of CICAD's Group of Experts on Demand Reduction -- as well as the Pan American Health Organization. We have held webinars on this topic to further inform our member states and others, and are planning a series of dialogues with civil society on demand reduction issues starting in July.

-- We have held three webinars on alcohol use during the pandemic. Free from prohibitions on drinking in the workplace, those working from home are vulnerable to alcohol use that can affect their job performance in addition to their family relationships.

-- We have held several virtual events to discuss alternatives to incarceration for drug-related crimes. As countries seek to reduce prison populations because of the risk of spread of COVID-19 within penitentiaries, alternatives to incarceration such as drug treatment courts and diversion programs -- sound ideas during normal times -- become even more attractive.

-- In the area of supply reduction, we recently inaugurated the first of several virtual courses at our Regional Counterdrug Intelligence School of the Americas, known by its Spanish language acronym, *ERCAIAD*, based in Bogota, Colombia, and run jointly with the Colombian National Police. We are also planning virtual courses for a parallel school for English-speaking Caribbean member states, headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago.

-- We very recently published a paper entitled, "Considerations for Drug Research and COVID-19," to assist member states with monitoring drug use."

-- This month we launched online training for national early warning systems, and continue to expand the Early Warning System of the Americas, which, crucially, *links* national early warning systems; and

-- Very shortly, we will send a questionnaire to member states regarding telephone helplines to assist drug dependents and their loved ones. During this time of social isolation, it is important to help member states establish or strengthen such helplines.

During the past months we in the Executive Secretariat have worked with CICAD chair the United States to prepare a draft new OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategy and corresponding Plan of Action, and have also worked with Canada, the chair of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism's Intergovernmental Working Group, or IWG, to craft alternatives for the MEM's eighth round. Canada corresponded with the IWG just yesterday regarding the MEM, and I understand the U.S. will correspond with member states on the Strategy and Plan of Action by the end of this month. I look forward to CICAD's 68th regular session later this year, at which the new Strategy, Plan of Action, and MEM eighth round plan are all scheduled to be considered for approval of this Commission.

Before concluding, I want to recognize the chief of the MEM Unit, Sofia Kosmas, who has announced her retirement from the OAS at the end of August. Sofi has been with CICAD since January of 1990 – that’s more than 30 years – and with the MEM Unit since 2000. It has been my honor and pleasure to work with Sofi during my three-and-a-half years as CICAD Executive Secretary, and know that all of us wish her the best for her retirement in her home country of Panama. Sofi, I can figuratively hear the applause coming from all over the Hemisphere, even if it isn’t possible to hear it over this KUDO platform.

Lastly, thank you to our donors for their flexibility in adapting funding during these unprecedented times, and to our member states for understanding the virtual adaptations necessary. In this time of pandemic, of uncertain duration, the CICAD Executive Secretariat will continue to foster dialogue with and between member states, as well as international partners, and will continue to provide pertinent information and training to help the nations of the OAS respond to the ever-changing drug problem.

Thank you.