

**ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
AMERICAN STATES, AT THE THIRD MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE
GROUP OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION
(CICAD)**

Washington, D.C., May 4, 1998

As Secretary General of the OAS, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you today to this house of the Americas, which is honored to have all of you here for the Third Consultative Meeting of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

This is the first time that CICAD has met since the Summit of Santiago, Chile, at which the heads of state of the Hemisphere assigned the OAS many new responsibilities. Without feeding false expectations, I am among those who believe that based on the process begun with the Summit of the Americas, there has been such a great change in inter-American relations that one might even say that we are contributing to the emergence of a new hemispheric order.

However, it is up to us to build this new era in the Americas – an era in which the nations are united by a series of common values and principles, agreement serves as the basis for multilateral action, the efforts of our nations are united to combat common enemies, national interests and democratic values converge in an effective manner, and our collective action is based on cooperation.

From this stems the importance of this meeting of CICAD, the goal of which is to begin in earnest negotiations on the implementation of one of the most important mandates defined by our heads of state in Santiago, Chile. That mandate is, and I quote, “to develop a singular and objective process of multilateral governmental evaluation in order to monitor the progress of their individual and collective efforts in the Hemisphere and of all the countries participating in the Summit, in dealing with the diverse manifestations of the problem” of drugs. The challenge of shaping this initiative and making it relevant is therefore great; and we are here to do that to the fullest.

Mr. Director of CICAD, Delegates:

Today, we must repeat something that we have said often in recent months, since in many sectors of public opinion in the Hemisphere this concept has not been completely understood. Many people wonder how this process relates or compares to the certification process carried out by the United States. The answer is quite simple. This is a process that is based on providing continuity to and projecting the cooperation agreed on in the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere, reached in CICAD. Some of its guiding principles are found in our Charter and in the Strategy, and with it being successful and based on solid technical arguments, it will hold great legitimacy and credibility and will serve as *the* point of reference for governments, the media, and civil society.

We will be strengthening our hemispheric alliance against drugs through the establishment of a multilateral monitoring and evaluation instrument, enabling the countries to be more rigorous in their analyses and providing them with some parameters to evaluate the quality and relevance of their policies, strengthen and periodically adapt them, compare the effectiveness of their working methods, further benefit from their successes and mistakes, and benefit from the information and from similar experiences in other countries. It does not involve creating any kind of supranational tribunal and does not call for the establishment of sanctions.

To this end, in the two previous consultative meetings of CICAD, held in March 1988 and December 1997, the member countries already made progress by defining nine fundamental principles to guide the establishment of this mechanism. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight three of these principles. Firstly, the process will be carried out following the principles of shared responsibility, reciprocity, and balance and consensus among the states. Secondly, the establishment and implementation of the mechanism must be flexible, so as to enable each state to implement it in keeping with its situation and needs. It must also ensure the full observance of the principle of transparency, so the governments can work individually and collectively towards achieving common goals. And thirdly, the evaluations must be technical and governmental, and government officials specializing in the fight against drugs must participate therein.

Ambassadors, Delegates:

It is clear that today CICAD is one of the most dynamic and important elements of the OAS and in the inter-American system, in particular because of the effective way in which it responded to the mandates of the presidents who met in Miami. All the countries, promptly and with a tremendous show of political resolve, defined and implemented the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere. Now, a few days after the holding of the Summit of Santiago, CICAD is already

preparing to fulfill the new missions assigned to it. This is, of course, a reflection of the dynamism of its Executive Director, David Beall, and his entire team; but above all it is a reflection of the political resolve helping the countries of the Americas to fight tirelessly and using all the methods within their reach against the social scourge of drugs, which degrades our societies, and enshrouds our countries in violence, crime, and corruption.

For this reason, I believe that the evaluation mechanism being defined must bear in mind relevant experiences that were successfully carried out nationally and regionally and the principles and justifications contained in existing international agreements, particularly the 1988 Vienna Convention; it must also be compatible with the standards and procedures on which international cooperation is based and those found in the documents adopted by CICAD. What you design must be compatible with the characteristics of a new world – one of economic globalization and integration at all levels, one that knocked down trade barriers and allows for the increased mobility of persons, goods, and capital.

Therefore, it is important to view this mandate assigned to CICAD as part of the whole set of subjects addressed by the heads of state in the Plan of Action adopted in Santiago, Chile. As I just mentioned, at the Summit there was a profound change in the approach to inter-American relations. It is a change in which cooperation and the joint action of our countries prevail and in which the economic, political, social, and cultural ties in our region have become stronger through hemispheric dialogue and the interaction of our governments.

The Presidents meeting in Santiago called on us to approach the issue of the multilateral alliance against drugs from a comprehensive perspective in which we do not fail to see the forest for the trees. I too feel that the best way to strengthen our multilateral anti-drug efforts is to broadly integrate them with other social objectives outlined at the Summit. In fact, our strategy for supply and demand reduction should be implemented using programs carried out at all levels of society. The harmful effects of drug abuse and trafficking do not have an impact on only a group of countries or some sectors of society, but rather on all nations and societies. Phenomena such as violence, terrorism, or corruption, which are all fed by drug trafficking, lead to the breakdown of societies as a whole. The strong and ongoing commitment of CICAD, the OAS, the governments, communities, and even individual actors is therefore needed.

One of the most important subjects of the Summit of Santiago was education, with the understanding that it is a decisive factor in the development of our countries. There is no doubt that education and drug prevention go hand in hand. Education and awareness-raising in the population on the destructive consequences of drugs are an essential part of our multilateral strategy.

Another point on which the Plan of Action ties in with the fight against drugs is that of economic alternatives for those persons involved in the drug business, to

ensure that people have opportunities to improve their standard of living, while at the same time contributing to the advancement of their communities and strengthening civil society.

The fight against drugs is also linked to the health sector. In fact, our Hemispheric Strategy includes the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users as an important measure for demand reduction. The goal of improving the basic health services contained in the plan of action and access to those services can be considered an anti-drug initiative and an opportunity to explore new ways of approaching use prevention and the treatment of addicts. In addition, it is usually nurses and doctors who inform and educate their patients on the potential effects of drugs.

Likewise, the strengthening of our countries' legal systems is a key component in the fight against drugs. Each of the presidents of the Americas meeting in Santiago reaffirmed the commitment of his country to implementing mechanisms that give all persons easy and timely access to justice; combat corruption; provide judges and lawyers with proper training; strengthen the fight against organized and transnational crime; and promote legal and judicial cooperation among the countries in the Hemisphere. All measures taken to achieve these objectives will have a direct and positive impact on effectively reducing the supply and use of drugs.

Delegates, Friends:

Although I am aware that there are still many hurdles to overcome and that the long road ahead is full of risks, I believe that our countries and the OAS and CICAD have an unprecedented opportunity to once again show leadership and commitment in their fight against drug trafficking and all manifestations of the phenomenon of drugs. This involves showing that through collective action we can face the great threats to our security and our democracies.

I cannot close without emphasizing the speed with which we have taken action. It was at the twenty-second regular session of CICAD, held in Lima in November 1997, that the United States and Honduras proposed establishing a multilateral mechanism to evaluate the fight against drugs that is compatible with the Hemispheric Strategy. In a mere five months, that proposal was welcomed with enthusiasm by the heads of state of the Americas and today is about to become a new inter-American instrument of cooperation.

The General Secretariat of the Organization will be paying close attention to the decisions taken within the framework of CICAD, in order to resolutely and confidently support and implement in the future the process that is beginning and which is crucial for the complete fulfillment of the processes of integration to which we in the Americas are all committed.

Thank you very much.