

**Opening Statement before the 47th Regular Session of
the Organization of American States (OAS)
Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)**

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May 3, 2010

Thank you, Ambassador Johnson. It is a pleasure to be here with you to open this 47th Regular Session of CICAD. This has been an important year for CICAD, and I would like to recognize Ambassador Johnson and Vice Chair Santokhi of Suriname for their able leadership of this Commission. I would also like to thank the leadership and staff of the CICAD Executive Secretariat for their fine work in support of your efforts.

This meeting of the Commission is particularly well timed, as the subject of a new strategy on drugs for the hemisphere is a prominent feature on this agenda. In the United States, we are about to release a new National Drug Control Strategy of our own, which will represent a new direction in U.S. drug policy under President Obama's leadership. The Administration's commitment to reducing drug use and its consequences in the United States and in cooperation with our partners around the world is exemplified in the President's FY 2011 Budget request, which proposes a half billion dollar increase to the overall drug control budget. This will provide much needed resources in our efforts to curb both the demand and supply of drugs in the United States and around the world.

Throughout my 37-year career in law enforcement, I have seen first-hand the terrible toll drugs take on individuals, families, and communities. Tragically, drug use leads individuals to do terrible things, often to the people who love them the most. Drugs are a huge threat to our society; one that demands a comprehensive and effective response.

The Strategy, which will be released soon, will emphasize a renewed commitment to reduce U.S. drug consumption. We have increased our investment in vital demand-side programs, while maintaining the long-term commitment to disrupting drug trafficking organizations at home and abroad. We are also paying special attention this year to three priority issues: drugged driving, prescription drug abuse, and prevention. Key themes of our forthcoming *Strategy*, reflected in President Obama's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget request, will be:

Community-Based Prevention: Preventing drug use before it begins is a cost-effective, commonsense way to build safe and healthy communities. Research on adolescent brain development shows there is an at-risk period for the development of substance use disorders; people who reach the age of 21 without developing a substance abuse problem, in most cases, will never do so. For this reason, the largest percentage increase (over 13%) in anti-drug funding in the Obama Administration budget is for prevention. We are very pleased that this week's agenda includes a panel discussion on community-based approaches not only to prevention, but also to treatment and recovery.

Early Intervention: Substance abuse costs billions of dollars in health care spending annually, with most funds expended on avoidable, catastrophic consequences of

addiction, such as emergency room visits, rather than its treatment. It is time to integrate care for substance use disorders into the rest of the health care system. This includes an expansion of screening and brief intervention and referral to treatment programs in an array of settings. Screening programs have repeatedly proven to be extremely cost-effective by interrupting drug-use patterns before severe addiction develops.

Treatment and Recovery: Addiction treatment should be readily available and of high quality. We must integrate addiction treatment into mainstream medicine, and we must ensure care is guided by the best scientific evidence. Treatment must also offer the continuing support required to provide a reliable pathway not only to short-term stabilization, but also to sustained recovery – meaning a full, healthy, and responsible life for persons who once struggled with addiction. It is also important to focus on vulnerable populations, such as addicted women who have dependent children. In these cases, family-based treatment programs can accommodate the needs of both mothers and children.

Drugs and Crime: Drug use is often interwoven with criminal behavior that disrupts family, neighborhood, and community life in fundamental and long-lasting ways. Therefore, the criminal justice system plays an important role in reducing drug use and its consequences. The results from long-standing initiatives, such as drug courts, and newer efforts, including “smart” probation programs with swift and certain, but brief sanctions, have been extremely encouraging. We must now expand such initiatives so all those for whom diversion from incarceration is appropriate, can participate. These innovative programs break the cycle of drug use, arrest, release and re-arrest and are more cost-effective than long-term incarceration.

Domestic Enforcement: Drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) move large quantities of illicit drugs world-wide. Indeed, they are transnational criminal enterprises that perpetrate extreme acts of violence and intimidation, foster corruption, and destabilize democratic institutions and the rule of law. The activities of these DTOs affect the national security of all Member States. These same groups often work through street and prison gangs, and frequently employ local criminal networks. It is important to seize drugs, money, and weapons from DTOs, but it is even more important to use seizures to increase our understanding of how these groups operate, so they can be disrupted and dismantled.

International Partnerships: We recognize that U.S. drug consumption directly affects many countries around the world by supporting illicit drug markets, production, and trafficking. Success against international drug trafficking organizations will require close and sustained partnerships with other countries. These partnerships should include, but not be limited to, interdiction and eradication – it is also vital that we work together to build institutions and capacity. Our multilateral collaboration will also include an increased emphasis on prevention, treatment, and recovery support to assist nations who have developed drug consumption problem, which is often primarily due to their role as a transit nation. The past two decades have witnessed a strengthening worldwide resolve to address the threat of drug production, trafficking, and abuse. CICAD has played an important role in building that resolve and the United States remains committed to this important work.

The Agenda for CICAD 47

As I mentioned previously, this meeting is especially well-timed from the perspective of the United States, as both CICAD and our government are moving forward with new strategies to address the drug problem. I would like to thank the Government of Brazil for their leadership in the process of developing the new strategy for the hemisphere, which addresses new threats, utilizes new tools and understanding, and strengthens the bonds of international cooperation in the hemisphere. The United States looks forward to working again with its partners in the hemisphere to develop a corresponding plan of action.

We also look forward to receiving the latest updates on the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). Perhaps one of CICAD's greatest achievements, the MEM is an innovative tool that allows us to reflect on the progress we have made. Perhaps more importantly, the MEM has ushered in an era of unprecedented transparency and cooperation. The MEM allows us to clearly confront the challenges and problems that remain before us as a hemisphere to ensure that we continue to move in the right direction.

One of the issues highlighted in the submission of the United States to the MEM this year was the new information we have on the extent of drugged driving in our Nation, and we are very pleased that a discussion of this issue has been included on the agenda. Far too many people are using drugs and then getting behind the wheel in the United States, with deadly results. According to a study conducted by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the results of which will be presented to you this afternoon, more than 12 percent of weekend nighttime drivers tested positive for illicit drugs. Five percent of weekend nighttime drivers had prescription or other pharmaceutical drugs in their systems. We are particularly interested in hearing about what other countries in the hemisphere know about this problem among their populations, and what we can do to increase awareness and prevent this dangerous—often tragic—behavior.

In addition to the panel on community-based prevention, treatment, and recovery, we also welcome the discussions on new trends in the areas of synthetic drugs, heroin, and marijuana. With regard to marijuana, I would like to take the opportunity to be clear about the Obama Administration's position. The Obama Administration is opposed, and I am personally opposed, to legalizing marijuana or any other illicit drug. Research and experience have shown that by widening availability, we increase the acceptance and use of these drugs and the harmful consequences that go with it. We also believe medicine should be determined by science, not by popular vote. Raw marijuana plant material has not been shown to be safe and effective. In the United States, hundreds of researchers are licensed to study marijuana and its properties, but to date, the rigorous scientific review process has not yielded positive results demonstrating efficacy of raw marijuana as medicine.

Finally, in the areas of interdiction and supply reduction, we look forward to this week's discussion on self-propelled semi-submersibles (SPSS), forensic analysis, and alternative development. SPSS are built for one purpose only: to carry a large amount of an illegal cargo (currently cocaine) in a stealth manner, which also makes them a hazard to navigation. In response, the United States and Colombia have both passed legislation that have outlawed the operation of these vessels and enabled prosecution of their crews. We look forward to discussing ways we can make further progress in the hemisphere against this threat.

With regard to forensic analysis, we recognize that drug signature and profiling programs, and analysis of purity and adulterants, can significantly strengthen our strategic understanding of global drug trends and thereby inform policy and resource allocation. DEA will be discussing its activities in this area tomorrow afternoon, and we are interested in hearing about the experiences of other delegations in this area, as well as exploring potential avenues of cooperation in this field to strengthen our knowledge of the hemispheric-and global-drug situation.

Alternative development also has an appropriate place on this week's agenda. When the security situation permits it, efforts to disrupt drug production at its source should include assistance for the development of sustainable income sources and institutional strengthening, with respect for human rights and democracy. We have found that ensuring community participation in selecting the types of assistance—and providing alternative development assistance before eradication begins—can be critical to success. Such investments need to be sustained to make it possible to stop drug production and strengthen the rule of law. Continuing to increase and expand these kinds of international and regional partnerships is essential, if we are to achieve the level of supply reduction necessary to impact the trafficking situation in a meaningful way.

The Road Ahead

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close by recognizing the role that CICAD has played for more than twenty years in strengthening international resolve and cooperation—in this hemisphere and beyond—against the world drug problem. With a new hemispheric strategy, the development of a corresponding plan of action, and an evaluation system looked at as a model around the world, I am confident that this Commission will continue to advance the health and safety of citizens for many years to come. Thank you.