

OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL CALLS FOR STRONG ACTION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

November 17, 2010

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert R. Ramdin, has called on Governments in the hemisphere to work cooperatively with all sectors of society to bring the benefits of sustainable development to all their citizens and to step up their own efforts to become more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change and other natural hazards.

Speaking today at the opening ceremony of the Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development, Ambassador Ramdin highlighted the many challenges faced by the region over the past years including the crippling earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, the droughts, storms and hurricanes in the Caribbean and Central America.

At the same time, he stressed the unprecedented strides that have been made since the First Ministerial on Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 4 years ago, as well as the heightened levels of hemispheric cooperation that have marked the response to the new environmental challenges that are emerging in the region.

"While we still have a long and arduous road ahead, we agree that change is necessary in how we think and act when it comes to sustainable development, and our response to natural hazards and climate change. The OAS will continue to stand by and with the Governments and peoples in the hemisphere as they try to build livelihoods and resilient societies and economies."

The Assistant Head of the OAS called on OAS Member States to focus on old as well as new challenges such as climate change which he described as a real and present threat to lives and livelihoods. He also called on the international community to honor the pledges made at the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Copenhagen to curb their greenhouse gas emissions and to make available the promised funds for adaptation to climate change in the most vulnerable regions.

Ambassador Ramdin had high praise for the Government of the Dominican Republic for its continuing support to its neighbor Haiti in the aftermath of the severe earthquake there in January of this year. He also commended the host Government for pioneering role as one of the first countries to sign and ratify the 70 year old Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere.

The three-day meeting brought together Ministers, High level authorities and experts in areas related to social, economic and environmental issues from OAS member states to work together on the Declaration of Santo Domingo, which will provide a framework for improving regional cooperation and implementing practical strategies to address environmental challenges in the Americas.