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INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE

CONTROL COMMISSION

CICAD

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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SPEECH OF THE HONORABLE CHANDRIKAPERSAD SANTOKHI, CHAIR OF CICAD

**Speech of the Honorable Chandrikapersad Santokhi, Chair of CICAD,
on the occasion of the Opening of the 50th Regular CICAD session
on the 2nd of November 2011, in Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Representative of Argentina.....

Secretary General of the OAS,

Members of the Council of Ministers,

Ambassadors and Representatives of the Corps Diplomatique,

Dignitaries,

Fellow Commissioners,

Delegates,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Guests,

[Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, All Protocols Observed]

May I, as outgoing Chair of CICAD, welcome you at this anniversary session, the 50th Regular Session of CICAD, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. And I wish to welcome in particular, the leadership and staff of the CICAD Secretariat, all our friends, delegation members, as well as all other guests.

May I extend a special word of welcome to our newly appointed executive secretary of the CICAD Dr. Paul Simons, who will take the leadership of the CICAD Secretariat in the 25th anniversary year of the CICAD.

Ladies and gentlemen, the 50th Regular session of the CICAD marks 25 years of joint efforts to address the drug issue in an institutionalized, structured manner in the OAS, and must, for that reason alone, be qualified as a special meeting. Therefore I wish to congratulate the commissioners, heads of delegation, delegation members, the leadership and staff of the CICAD Secretariat, and all our friends for having joined in this effort and in sustaining it for this long.

And on this special occasion I again wish to emphasize the decision we took in our Paramaribo meeting that we do need to look at where we now are as a specialized body of the OAS, charged with the drug problem in the Western Hemisphere. There are especially 3 matters we need to look into:

1. Examine and redefine the role of CICAD in the Western Hemisphere as it now shares the playing field with other anti-drug coordination bodies.
2. Examine and redefine the internal CICAD organization, meaning, take a look again after 25 years at its tasks, responsibilities as well as its Statute and Regulations.
3. Examine the status of the drug problem and the drug policy globally, 50 years after the first drug convention of the UN, and examine and evaluate the structural cooperation between CICAD and the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] in the field of the implementation of drug programs in the Western Hemisphere.

And I am very pleased to notice that agenda for this session is giving us some room to consider these topics.

Fellow delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The past year was a special year for me, in many aspects. Special, because, although I was not part of the Government, but Member of the Parliament in the opposition, I still was nominated by the Surinamese Government for the position of CICAD chair. And then another dimension was added when I was recently elected as Chairman of the largest opposition political party in Parliament. However, I received and still receive all the needed support from the Government of Suriname.

As I stated in my inception speech last year, I wanted to do my utmost, within the limits of my capacities, with your support, what I considered indispensable, to lead CICAD to continue with its mission, which is to strengthen the hemispheric cooperation in the fight against the drug problem.

Set against this background, the following are what I wanted to pay special attention to, in my year as CICAD Chair:

1. Implement the Hemispheric Strategy.
2. Organize a successful 49th conference in Suriname.
3. Evaluate the CICAD organization after 25 years and its role and mission, as well as developing more synergy with regional and sub regional organizations, but also following and timely responding on the new developments in all aspects of the drugs problem and all levels within the drug control continuum.
4. Intensify the involvement of CARICOM in the implementation of drug policies.
5. Strengthen the drug policy in Suriname.

Looking back, I am satisfied, as we were able to achieve specifically:

1. After my election as the CICAD Chair, the drugs policy of Suriname was energized on all levels. The Government of Suriname organized a one day Drugs Policy seminar, followed by a two days special meeting on CICAD drug policy and Surinamese drugs policy, organized by the Parliament of Suriname, the National Assembly. The drug problem was included as one of the seven priority areas directly under the responsibility of the Cabinet of the President.
2. As regards the organization of a good CICAD 49 conference in Suriname, I can say that all the participants experienced a very well organized conference with a good participation of the CICAD members, and I wish to express my appreciation for everyone who made their contribution to this.
3. The adoption of the Plan of Action in Paramaribo was one of the highlights, and all countries are now in process to implement this. The Suriname Drug Master Plan has been finalized and recently approved by the Government, along with the newly developed National Drug Prevention Plan of Suriname. With this, Suriname is one of the first countries with a newly developed drug master plan for the period of 2011-2016, which comprises the new elements of our new hemispheric drugs strategy and the approved action plan.

4. With regard to promoting synergy, this was something I clearly experienced myself in the internal OAS organizations. And I specifically refer within this framework to the first meeting of the Secretariat of Multidimensional Security, for which all leaders of the Secretariat of Multidimensional Security, the CICAD, the CICTE, the DPS, the REMJA, the CIFTE and the DDHS were invited to look at the security issues from all different perspectives.

This was to prepare well for the MISPA 3 meeting. And in my opinion these types of meetings should be institutionalized. Outside this context, there were also increased synergy meetings, which I attended with other international organizations, and I recall the OAS meeting in El Salvador, the CND meeting in Vienna, the meeting with the Acting Secretary General of CARICOM, which all reinforced the need to strengthen synergy, so that duplication and overlap can be prevented. And I sincerely hope this will continue like that.

5. As the CICAD Chair, I also attended different meetings, both on national and international level and was honored to give many different presentations, and also to give more exposure to the work of CICAD. And I was honored to receive an award in my capacity of CICAD Chair from the Surinamese Diaspora community in the Netherlands.

For Suriname, it is also important to mention that, based on the new approach of the Hemispheric Strategy, education on the world drug problem is now incorporated in the University Program of the University of Suriname.

In conclusion, my period as Chairman of CICAD was highlighted by a good cooperation with the Surinamese Government, the Suriname CICAD desk, the CICAD Secretariat, especially Ambassador James Mack, who we honored in Suriname during CICAD 49 for his achievements and leadership of CICAD.

And I will leave with mixed feelings. We achieved good results in my past year as Chair of CICAD. However, several countries in our hemisphere do not experience an improvement in the drug situation, but on the contrary, a deterioration. The security of our countries and citizens is at stake. And the question is, whether there should be a new role for CICAD, and if so, what should be the role of CICAD. This may be a thought for the CICAD Commissioners, in considering the future mission of CICAD, whether maybe a CICAD law enforcement assistance unit needs to be developed to assist countries in their fight against drugs, a regional assistance team of drug fighters, comprising of drugs experts from all the members states based, on the principle of collective efforts and shared responsibility.

In closing, I wish to express my appreciation to all of you, the CICAD staff, James Mack, but also the new Executive Secretary Paul Simons and everyone who was instrumental in making this a good year for us all.

Finally I thank the Government of Argentina for hosting this CICAD 50 conference, the good organization, the welcoming and the hospitality.

I wish you all a productive, fruitful and a pleasant conference.

Thank you.