



## Organization of American States

Launch of Guyana School Survey Report  
Wednesday, September 16, 2015  
Cara Lodge, Georgetown

Remarks  
Jean Ricot Dormeus  
OAS Representative

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Thank you Master of ceremonies Mike Atherley.

Honorable Khemraj Ramjattan, Vice President and Minister of Public Security,  
Colleagues Pierre Giroux, High Commissioner of Canada and Bryan Hunt, Chargé  
d’Affaires of the United States of America, and other members of the Diplomatic corps,  
Colleagues Pernel Clarke and Tiffany Barry of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control  
Commission (CICAD),  
Distinguished partners and participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always an auspicious occasion to monitor and maintain the path toward a better future, and we are doing just that with the launch of the Guyana School Drug Survey Report. It is even more satisfying that this event coincides with the Education month. Since the beginning of September, I have been hearing tips, jingles, interviews and statements about the importance of education, in particular literacy under the theme “Quality Education Leadership: Improving Schools from Within”. This morning, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the OAS joins with the Ministry of Public Security to lay a brick in the education construction, actually in the edification of

a society of well-being, by assessing the prevalence of drugs within the system, which should equip us for better policies and strategies.

Let me thank the Government of Guyana for partnering with the OAS on this important initiative, and also for the fine work that they continue to do in coordinating regular meetings of the National Drug Information Network (GuyDIN) and in producing their annual report. In particular, I wish to recognize the unwavering commitment and support of Minister of Public Security Khemraj Ramjattan and his staff.

It has become a no-brainer that substance abuse negatively impacts on the security and development of our countries. You just need to check the news to have a slight idea of violence, crime and health disturbances caused by drugs in our region, including the loss of bright, gifted and talented minds. In some countries, the scourge has taken alarming proportions. In order to fight it effectively, we need to have access to information that is reliable, up-to-date and comparable so that a better understanding of the situation is achieved and relevant policies and programs can be crafted in response. There lies the *raison d'être* of the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID) of CICAD which supports OAS member states in the collection and generation of drug-related data and statistics.

Today we will be focusing on drug use and related behaviors of the high school population. The school drug survey was administered to secondary school students in Guyana in 2007 and again in 2013. So today you will be presented with not only recent information about drug consumption among our youth, but you will also see a brief comparison of the 2007 and 2013 results. I wish I could report that substance abuse is not an issue among students in Guyana, but it is only a wish. My colleagues Pernell and Tiffany will present the findings of the survey shortly.

I would like to highlight that the first regional report on drug use among Caribbean students was released in 2011, at the biennial meeting of Caribbean Drug Observatories

that was held in Trinidad & Tobago and the OID is now preparing to launch the 2nd edition of this report with data generated between 2013 and 2014. Additionally, earlier this year, the OID released the Report on Drug Use in the Americas which highlights the trends in drug consumption of various populations across the hemisphere. Data from the most recent round of school surveys are also included in this report.

Guyana is now the 6th out of 11 Caribbean countries to present their survey results to stakeholders and we would like to congratulate The Ministry of Public Security for making this possible. A great deal of planning and organization went into the surveys. CICAD trained coordinators and technical advisors from 12 countries in a 3-day seminar in Suriname in January 2013 and they were in turn responsible for going back to their countries, assembling a team and implementing the survey. We further supported this project in all of the countries by hiring Technical Advisors to support and carry out the training, data analysis, and report writing activities.

I wish to thank the United States and Canada for supporting CICAD's initiatives, including this school survey. One of the important elements of today's exercise is a panel discussion with stakeholders during which we will consider policy issues for consideration by local authorities.

I would like to leave you with an interesting story about spotting danger and doing something about it. Four year old Rosie Moran was biking around her Boise, Idaho, neighborhood ahead of her father and her little sister, when she spotted black smoke billowing from a home. Rosie went speeding back to her father and she screamed, "Daddy, there's a fire in one of the houses!" One side of the home was ablaze. The father pounded on the door and alerted the family inside, who had no idea their home was on fire because they were bathing their kids in the bathroom — right on the other side of the burning wall. Homeowner Ernie Ortiz immediately rushed his wife and two young daughters outside. "Five minutes later, it would have been a totally different

story,” agreed the Boise Fire Department which sent over four fire trucks to extinguish the fire.

The survey shows us the smoke. The right policies and strategies will help us to control and put out the fire. With the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders, Guyana has been taking up the challenge and its success will make our region safer.

Thank you and God bless you.