



**OAS | CICAD**



**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE  
CONTROL COMMISSION**

**CICAD**

**SIXTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION  
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Washington, D.C.**

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**Remarks Ambassador Nestor Mendez**

**Inaugural Session CICAD 61**

Sixty-First Regular Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control  
Commission (CICAD 61)

**Nestor Mendez Address at Opening Session**  
Assistant Secretary General  
Organization of American States (OAS)

**Washington, D.C. April 24, 2017**

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Distinguished Commissioners, representatives of member state institutions, members of the Diplomatic Corps, civil society members, OAS colleagues.

I would first like to convey a very warm welcome on behalf of Secretary General Luis Almagro, who is unable to join us today. I would also like to thank the Government of The Bahamas for organizing, in its role as Chair, this Sixty-First Regular Session of CICAD.

In the opening session of the last CICAD Regular Session in Nassau, Secretary General Almagro declared that it was time to “turn the language of our discourse into a tangible, measurable reality, one that results in real change.” The natural question is, how to accomplish this? Let me offer two answers:

First, we needed to fulfill the wishes of OAS member states to strengthen CICAD’s Executive Secretariat, a wish expressed in CICAD’s 59<sup>th</sup> Regular Session. Today, by my side, is Ambassador Adam Namm, who came on board as CICAD Executive Secretary last December after a nearly 30-year career as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. Less than five months into his tenure, Ambassador Namm has already effected positive change in the Executive Secretariat of CICAD, and gained my confidence and that of the Secretary General, as well as his colleagues within CICAD and in other parts of the OAS. I also want to take this opportunity to thank Assistant Executive Secretary Angela Crowdy for leading CICAD during the year-and-a-half gap between executive secretaries, and the rest of the CICAD team for their hard work and perseverance through challenging times.

Y con apenas unos meses de diferencia en su llegada, quería destacar también el nombramiento de la nueva Secretaria de Seguridad Multidimensional, la **Dra. Claudia Paz y Paz**, quién también nos acompaña en el día de hoy. La Secretaria Paz y Paz es una persona de reconocido prestigio a nivel internacional, y su historial profesional como anterior Fiscal General de Guatemala, la posiciona sin duda en un lugar estratégico dentro de esta organización.

En segundo lugar, hablábamos de los esfuerzos por aterrizar en práctica tangible nuestras políticas sobre drogas, **desde y en colaboración con los Estados Miembros**. El Secretario General nos traía a colación aquel Informe sobre Drogas de 2013, que subrayaba que “el problema de las drogas debía ser abordado de manera diferenciada y flexible en cada país, en función de la forma como éste los afecta en cada caso particular”. Entre los retos, tenemos algunos que podríamos denominar de “**nueva generación**” (como las necesarias estrategias ante la proliferación de nuevas sustancias psicoactivas), pero si me lo permiten, en su mayoría, **no son temas ajenos o emergentes**, sino que son temas que han estado acompañándonos durante años, y que ya se encuentran en el eje de discusión de todos los foros mundiales y regionales sobre drogas. Recordemos algunos de ellos:

- tener que centrarse en **el individuo como foco de la intervención**, y no en la sustancia;
- subrayar el enfoque de **derechos humanos** (incluida la salud pública), de **género** y de **desarrollo sostenible**;
- elaborar políticas basadas en **evidencia**;
- seguir avanzando para materializar la **participación de la sociedad** civil y otros actores claves en el debate, diseño, e implementación de nuestras políticas sobre drogas;
- continuar trabajando para **fortalecer nuestras capacidades institucionales**,
- lograr una más efectiva **coordinación inter-institucional** a todos los niveles y una mayor corresponsabilidad entre países e instituciones;

y por último y sobre todo

- **Favorecer un debate amplio** en nuestros debates con relación a aquellos temas que están en el día a día de nuestros ciudadanos.
- The Western Hemisphere is in the vanguard when it comes to viewing drug addiction as a public health issue, along with other progressive approaches to the drug problem that I just mentioned. The OAS, and CICAD specifically, play a vital role in fostering the exchange of information between member states, as well as building capacity in the countries of our hemisphere, so that OAS member states can continue to be in the vanguard vis-à-vis the drug problem.
- The 47th General Assembly of the Organization, to be held in Mexico City in June, will include panels on the four pillars of the OAS to address hemispheric and global challenges. The drug issue will be an intrinsic part of the Security table. I have no doubt that the discussions arising from the panels and presentations at this 61st regular session of CICAD

will provide valuable input for the dialogue at the upcoming General Assembly, whose theme is “Strengthening Dialogue and Concertation for Prosperity”.

I want to finish by congratulating all of you on the work you do. A special thanks to CICAD’s donors and partners for their crucial support. I wish you a productive next three days.