

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN ORDINARIA
CELEBRADA
EL 21 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1999

Aprobada en la sesión del 29 de noviembre de 1999

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CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN ORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 21 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1999

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y media de la mañana del martes 21 de septiembre de 1999, celebró sesión ordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Arlington Griffith Butler, KCMG, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador Lawrence Chewning Fábrega, Representante Permanente de Panamá
Embajador Richard Bernal, Representante Permanente de Jamaica
Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada
Embajador Lionel Alexander Hurst, Representante Permanente de Antigua y Barbuda
Embajador Flavio Darío Espinal, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana
Embajador Carlos Portales, Representante Permanente de Chile
Embajador Peter M. Boehm, Representante Permanente del Canadá
Embajador Michael Anthony Arneaud, Representante Permanente de Trinidad y Tobago
Embajador Alfonso Quiñónez Lemus, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Embajadora Laura Elena Núñez de Ponce, Representante Permanente de Honduras
Embajador Claude Heller, Representante Permanente de México
Embajador Hernán R. Castro H., Representante Permanente de Costa Rica
Embajador Luis Alfredo Ramos, Representante Permanente de Colombia
Embajador Patricio Vivanco, Representante Permanente del Ecuador
Embajador Álvaro Sevilla Siero, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua
Ministro Consejero Guy Pierre, Representante Interino de Haití
Ministro Juan José Arcuri, Representante Interino de la Argentina
Embajador Álvaro Moerzinger, Representante Interino del Uruguay
Ministra Consejera Cecily Norris, Representante Alternativa de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Primera Secretaria Edda D. Dumont-Adolph, Representante Alternativa del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Consejero Eduardo Antonio Hernández González, Representante Alternativo de El Salvador
Ministra Elizabeth Astete, Representante Alternativa del Perú
Consejero Julio César Arriola Ramírez, Representante Alternativo del Paraguay
Ministro Consejero Dante Coelho de Lima, Representante Alternativo del Brasil
Primer Secretario Luis Niño, Representante Alternativo de Venezuela
Embajador Ronald D. Godard, Representante Alternativo de los Estados Unidos
Ministro Consejero Alberto Quiroga García, Representante Alternativo de Bolivia
Primer Secretario Philip St. Hill, Representante Alternativo de Barbados
Primera Secretaria Deborah Yaw, Representante Alternativa de Guyana
Ministro Consejero Kevin Isaac, Representante Alternativo de Saint Kitts y Nevis

También estuvieron presentes el Secretario General de la Organización, doctor César Gaviria, y el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Christopher R. Thomas, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

El PRESIDENTE: I am pleased to call to order this regular meeting of the Permanent Council, convened to consider the items on the order of business, document CP/OD.1201/99.

[El orden del día contiene los siguientes puntos:

1. Presentación del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Tailandia, Excelentísimo Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, sobre “Nuestra percepción de los Estados Americanos”
2. Informe de la Presidencia de la Comisión de Asuntos Administrativos y Presupuestarios sobre el financiamiento de la reunión del Grupo de Trabajo Encargado de Preparar una Propuesta de Declaración Americana sobre los Derechos de las Poblaciones Indígenas
3. Aprobación del acta de la sesión celebrada el 26 de agosto de 1999 (CP/ACTA 1198/99)
4. Otros asuntos.]

PRESENTACIÓN DEL MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE TAILANDIA,
EXCELENTÍSIMO DOCTOR SURIN PITSUWAN, SOBRE “NUESTRA PERCEPCIÓN
DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS”

El PRESIDENTE: This Council is honored this morning by the presence of His Excellency Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Your Excellency, on behalf of the members of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, and I am pleased to invite you to address this Council on Thailand’s perception of the American states. Excellency, you have the floor.

El MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE TAILANDIA: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues:

It is a great honor and a special privilege for me to address this meeting of the Permanent Council of the OAS. The occasion is indeed gratifying for me and for my government, as it marks the culmination of the initiative and effort started by Thailand over a year ago when we submitted our application for permanent observer status at the OAS.

We in Thailand take great pride in being able to associate ourselves with the long tradition and the many accomplishments of the OAS, particularly as the Organization has just celebrated its 50th anniversary. Despite the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean that separates our two regions, Thailand shares the aspirations and ideals that the OAS has long cherished.

We can still recall that at one time, the Pacific Ocean used to be known as the Great Divide, but now, more than ever, it links our two regions closer together in ties of friendship, commerce, and partnership. In this day and age, distance and boundaries have become insignificant in the search for new friends and partners. Friendships and partnerships that reach beyond the confines of frontiers, region, nationality, race, and creed are essential to building the world of peace and harmony to which we all aspire.

The distance that once separated us has become insignificant in this era of globalization, especially when we think of the aspirations, values, and interests that increasingly bind us together. The pursuit of peace and security, the promotion of sustainable economic development, the advancement of democracy and human dignity, the struggle against all forms of social injustice, and the fight against the malaise afflicting our societies—such as the scourge of drugs and environmental degradation—are all objectives and tasks that we have in common. They transcend borders. They are also common challenges that require us to work together among nations and regions as part of a global community.

Indeed, these challenges that we face together require our close partnership. They require us to draw upon each other's strengths and to learn from each other's experiences, especially at this time when our regions and the world are undergoing profound changes due to the forces of globalization.

Nowhere is this process of change more evident than in Southeast Asia. The transformation that we are going through is nothing less than a c-change. The economic crisis that began in Thailand over two years ago has spurred the kinds of reforms and restructuring that no one could have imagined just a few years before. Of course, there are those who have cast doubt about whether these reforms are real and sustainable. But I for one have no doubt that if the nations of Southeast Asia are able to draw valuable lessons from the crisis and are willing to make the difficult choices and the hard decisions, we can indeed emerge stronger, more vigorous, and a little bit wiser. Given our track record, I am convinced that we can prove ourselves equal to the task.

What, then, are some of the lessons we have learned from the economic crisis? We have learned that economic development is more than a high growth rate; rather, it means the equitable distribution of wealth. We have learned that in spite of the massive influx of foreign investment and capital, we failed to put them to productive use to strengthen our own productivity, technology and know-how. We have also learned that without transparency, accountability, and good governance, capitalism can lead to the kind of excesses and abuses that constitute one of the root causes of the economic crisis. We have further learned that without adequate social safety nets, the social consequences of the crisis could be even more severe than the economic impact, lasting for generations to come. And we have learned that when political regimes draw their legitimacy from economic growth alone, they will crumble on the weight of their own corrosive and corrupt state apparatus.

The economic crisis has indeed propelled many of the nations of Southeast Asia along the path of both political and economic reforms. Today, the yearnings for economic and political reform is being heard throughout much of Southeast Asia, and indeed much progress is being made. From Cambodia to Indonesia and recently in East Timor, the voices of the people have spoken and they have made their choice about their future.

However, a sense of realism reminds all of us that democracy, civil liberty, and human rights cannot easily be achieved overnight or imposed from outside. Each nation has to go through its own struggle, consistent with its own specific circumstances and at its own pace. Democracy cannot simply be built from a house of cards; rather, it requires strong economic and political foundations and, above all, the building up of a pool of leaders and administrators who are attuned to the trends and changes shaping our world today.

We in Thailand have gone through our own struggle and so have many of the member states of the OAS represented in this room. Your example and experiences shall indeed provide valuable lessons and aspirations for many countries in Southeast Asia as we go through our process of reform and restructuring. We hope to emerge from this as stronger and more dynamic societies.

The nations of Southeast Asia are seeking individually to put our houses in order. Collectively, we are seeking to build a new regional order based on regionalism and regional integration—similar to the efforts that the member states of the OAS have been undertaking. For us, this year marks a crowning moment for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). We admitted Cambodia as our 10th member, thus bringing all 10 Southeast Asian nations into one united family of nations. At the same time, the enlargement of ASEAN has also brought on new challenges in terms of managing our growing diversity and interdependence. I believe that no other regional organization is so diverse in terms of political and economic systems and levels of development, yet tied increasingly together by common challenges and a common future.

I have spoken with many of your officers this morning, and I have learned a lot. I think we have a lot to learn from each other, particularly as seen from your side; for example, how to manage the diversity among your membership.

As the current Chair of ASEAN, Thailand does feel a heavy sense of responsibility to work with our ASEAN partners to manage the process of ASEAN expansion and to ensure that ASEAN remains both cohesive and relevant in the midst of the changing regional and international environment. At the same time, if ASEAN is to remain relevant, our regionalism must be open to greater interaction with those outside the region. We must also contribute to peace and stability, not only in our own region but in the world at large, as in the case of the OAS. This is reflected in the Treaty on the Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which echoes the same aspirations that many OAS member states have expressed in the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which Thailand also presently chairs, represents ASEAN's effort to contribute to peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region through multilateral security, dialogue, and cooperation aimed at confidence-building and enhancing transparency in defense policies and other matters among the member countries. Again, these are the very same objectives that the OAS has been promoting within your own geographical footprint.

Southeast Asia and the member states of the OAS are united in the same struggle for peace and security, for economic development, and for democracy and human dignity. Our aspirations for the future are one and the same. Given these facts, I believe that we should work towards broadening and deepening our links, be they political, economic, or social. Each of our nations should seek to strengthen trade and economic ties, for there are many areas and opportunities for closer cooperation.

In this effort, I believe that we should seek to establish links between the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), and these links could later be expanded to include the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). By linking our respective free trade zones, we shall generate new opportunities for trade and investment and advance the cause of free trade and economic liberalization at the multilateral level. We should also seek to expand our cooperation in the context of ASEAN-MERCOSUR and ASEAN-Andean relations, and through the recently established East Asia-Latin American Forum (EALAF). That forum held a senior official meeting in Singapore in early September. All these overlapping networks of linkages between our

two regions shall indeed create a partnership of synergy and create an alliance of progress and prosperity on both sides of and across the Pacific.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, now that Thailand is a permanent observer of the OAS, I pledge to you Thailand's full cooperation to work towards a closer and stronger partnership between the nations of our two regions so that in the next millennium, the common ideals and aspirations that bind us together will be realized for our mutual benefit and for the sake of peace, progress, and prosperity worldwide.

Thank you very much. [Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, sir. We have listened with great interest to your presentation this morning. May I take this opportunity to extend to you, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, and to the Government of Thailand this Council's appreciation for your visit and your presentation today.

I now give the floor to the distinguished Representative of the United States.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief, because I know that the Foreign Minister has other engagements here in Washington. But my delegation would not like to let the opportunity go by without, through you, thanking Foreign Minister Pitsuwan for a very interesting and useful presentation. We hope that this will be the first of many such exchanges between the two organizations.

My government welcomes Thailand's chairmanship of the ASEAN Regional Forum, a position that reflects Thailand's significant contributions to the evolution and strengthening of the Forum.

It seems that the OAS has faced many of the same challenges that the ASEAN Regional Forum faces today. In addressing those challenges, the OAS has made a lasting contribution to the peace and stability of the Western Hemisphere. As our countries become even more closely linked, cooperation between organizations such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the OAS can help to promote peace and stability both within this hemisphere and worldwide.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you. Once again, Foreign Minister Pitsuwan, I express the Council's appreciation for your visit and your presentation.

El MINISTRO DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE TAILANDIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

INFORME DEL PRESIDENTE DE LA COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS ADMINISTRATIVOS
Y PRESUPUESTARIOS SOBRE EL FINANCIAMIENTO DE LA REUNIÓN
DEL GRUPO DE TRABAJO ENCARGADO DE PREPARAR UNA PROPUESTA
DE DECLARACIÓN AMERICANA SOBRE LOS DERECHOS
DE LAS POBLACIONES INDÍGENAS

El PRESIDENTE: [Pausa.] The next item is the verbal report of the Chair of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP), Ambassador Lionel Hurst, concerning the financing of the Meeting of the Working Group to Prepare a Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations.

I give the floor to the distinguished Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the CAAP.

El PRESIDENTE DE LA COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS ADMINISTRATIVOS Y PRESUPUESTARIOS: Thank you very kindly.

Mr. Chairman, you may recall that at the regular meeting of this Council on August 26, our Council received the report of the Chair of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) concerning the Proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Populations, and that our Council took note of it. Our Council also approved the draft resolution convening a meeting of the Working Group to continue consideration of the Declaration. The meeting is to be held from November 8 to 12, 1999, at OAS headquarters.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, you may recall that the Permanent Council transmitted this resolution to the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP) for consideration, bearing in mind the possible financial implications. At its meeting held on September 14, the CAAP considered the issue, and we agreed on the following:

1. The meeting of November 8 through 12 is a regular meeting of the Working Group; it is not a meeting of experts, like the meeting held in February this year;
2. This meeting should be financed with funds allocated to the Permanent Council and its committees and working groups, and therefore there is no need for the CAAP to consider this issue; and
3. Unused funds from the expert meeting in February should be used to fund this regular meeting of the Working Group, and we are asking the Secretariat to act accordingly.

The Committee therefore asks this Council to decide that unused funds from the Permanent Council's budgeted resources be used to finance the November 8 to 12 Working Group meeting and that the Secretariat be asked to act accordingly in identifying the available resources.

Thank you very kindly, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Ambassador Hurst. I offer the floor to delegations to address this matter. There being no requests for the floor, the Chair suggests that this Council approve the

recommendation by the Chair of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP) and request the General Secretariat to act accordingly. It is so agreed.

APROBACIÓN DE ACTA

El PRESIDENTE: We will now move on to the approval of the minutes of the meeting held on August 26, 1999, CP/ACTA 1198/99. I have been informed by the Secretariat that the stylistic changes made by the delegations have been duly incorporated. If there are no further changes, the minutes are approved.

In accordance with Article 65 of the Rules of Procedure of the Permanent Council, the Secretariat has also distributed the minutes of the meeting of the Permanent Council held on September 13 [CP/ACTA 1199/99].

We have finished the consideration of the items on today's order of business. If delegations wish to bring any other matter to the Council's attention, they may do so at this time.

PALABRAS DEL REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DEL BRASIL SOBRE LA RATIFICACIÓN, POR PARTE DE SU PAÍS, DE LA CONVENCIÓN INTERAMERICANA CONTRA LA PRODUCCIÓN Y EL TRÁFICO ILÍCITOS DE ARMAS DE FUEGO, EXPLOSIVOS, MUNICIONES Y OTROS MATERIALES RELACIONADOS

El PRESIDENTE: I give the floor to the distinguished Representative of Brazil.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DEL BRASIL: Muito obrigado. Senhor Presidente, eu pedi a palavra, em nome da minha delegação, para trazer ao conhecimento desse Conselho que no dia 26 de agosto passado, o Governo brasileiro ratificou a Convenção Interamericana contra a Fabricação e o Tráfico Ilícitos de Armas de Fogo, Munições, Explosivos e Outros Materiais Correlatos.

O Governo brasileiro estará procedendo oportunamente ao depósito do instrumento de ratificação da referida Convenção junto à Secretaria-Geral desta Organização.

Senhor Presidente, trata-se de uma iniciativa pioneira que mais uma vez demonstra a capacidade da OEA de construir consensos em torno de temas complexos e sensíveis.

Minha delegação considera a negociação desta Convenção um passo significativo para o estabelecimento de mecanismos internacionais de controle da circulação de armas de fogo, dentro do contexto de iniciativas necessárias para fortalecer os instrumentos legais de promoção de uma maior segurança no Hemisfério.

A questão do controle de armas de fogo de pequeno porte, vem despertando, internamente, no Brasil, Senhor Presidente, um crescente interesse nacional, seja no plano federal, estadual e municipal e disso tem resultado iniciativas importantes como a modularização de campanhas de desarmamento e, no âmbito interno legislativo brasileiro, da apresentação ao Congresso Nacional de projetos de lei do Governo Federal sobre a limitação e proibição da venda de armas de fogo a civis.

O Governo brasileiro confia em que os demais Estados membros ratifiquem a Convenção Interamericana de modo que quando esteja estabelecida a futura Comissão Consultiva, prevista no artigo 21 da Convenção, possa operar como um instrumento efetivo de promoção do intercâmbio de informações e da cooperação entre os países do Hemisfério, bem como das medidas que facilitem a aplicação desta Convenção.

Esta, Senhor Presidente, é a razão e o motivo que me fizeram pedir a palavra neste momento para fazer esta comunicação. Muito obrigado, Senhor Presidente.

EL PRESIDENTE: Thank you very much.

INFORMACIÓN SOBRE EL FORO EMPRESARIAL DE LAS AMÉRICAS

EL PRESIDENTE: I now give the floor to the distinguished Representative of Canada.

EL REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DEL CANADÁ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

As colleagues here today are aware, my country has chaired the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) since the Santiago Summit in April 1998, at which time our leaders gave it the green light. Much progress has been made since then, especially as we look forward to a package of business facilitation measures that will be approved at the Fifth Western Hemisphere Trade Ministerial, to be held in Toronto on November 4. Canada will pass the torch to Argentina at the upcoming Trade Ministerial, and we anticipate working closely with the Government of Argentina and continuing collaboration with all of the other countries of the Hemisphere and the Tripartite Committee to realize the goal of a Free Trade Area of the Americas.

I would like to inform the Permanent Council about the traditional companion event to the Trade Ministerial; namely, the Americas Business Forum, which will be held in Toronto from November 1 to 3. The Americas Business Forum is the primary mechanism for private sector input to the FTAA negotiations. As host of the premier Americas business event of the year, Toronto will welcome more than 1,000 business leaders from North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean. This forum offers a preeminent opportunity for business leaders from throughout the Americas to make a high-level presentation of their views to the trade ministers of their countries.

We're circulating information packages now on the Forum for your information. Should you or your delegation require further information, do not hesitate to consult our hemispheric summit office website, located at www.americascanada.org.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

EL PRESIDENTE: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Canada.

COMENTARIOS DEL PRESIDENTE DE LA COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS ADMINISTRATIVOS
Y PRESUPUESTARIOS SOBRE LA SITUACIÓN FINANCIERA
DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN

EL PRESIDENTE: I now give the floor to the Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP).

EL PRESIDENTE DE LA COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS ADMINISTRATIVOS Y PRESUPUESTARIOS: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Chairman. I've taken the floor to address the financial situation of the Regular Fund.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, in July I accepted the chairmanship of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP). I did so somewhat reluctantly, in large part because I had not paid enough attention to the workings of the Committee during my three years here. But, nevertheless, I wish to share my first impressions on the financial situation of the Regular Fund. What I am about to say, therefore, is the perspective of a newcomer, in part innocent, but in part informed, and I do believe, sir, that it might be of some relevance.

During his inaugural speech to the Council on September 15, the Secretary General made reference to this endemic problem. The General Secretariat continues to confront the monthly tightening of cash flow as a consequence of the persistent difficulties in collecting quotas from the member states on time and to finance the level of expenses approved by member states in the form of an annual budget. Member states committed to \$73.7 million, which is due on January 1 to finance the budget.

In the past, it appears that payments from member states did not materialize on time. When we reviewed the rhythm of quota collections since December 1995, the evidence demonstrated that about 50 percent of the financing of the Regular Fund budget came from payment on arrears.

I'm aware that the General Secretariat has sent some formal notes to member states regarding quota arrears and the urgent need to submit payment plans. My understanding, nevertheless, is that a number of member states have yet to submit a payment plan or make payment in full. The General Secretariat has indicated that as of September 19, 1999, this year's quota payments have reached only \$24.6 million, leaving an unpaid balance of \$49.1 million. The \$24.6 million in quota collection for the current year represents payments received from 14 out of 34 member states.

There's another serious and important financial point that I would like to bring to your consideration, Mr. Chairman. In addition to the quotas from the member states to finance the Organization's Regular Fund budget, there are other sources of financing. Examples are the rental of the office space and the 15 percent that comes from the voluntary funds.

Beginning January 1, 2000, both sources of funding will be discontinued. The World Bank has exercised its option to cancel the lease agreement as of December 31, 1999. The creation of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), which we anticipate will take effect from January 1, may eventually eliminate the \$1.5 million that the voluntary funds usually contribute to the Regular Fund for administrative and technical support.

I am told that between 1995 and 1997, there was "other income," and that "other income" amounted to between 12.2 percent and 12.6 percent of the Regular Fund. But in 1998, that "other income" dropped to 7.8 percent, and in 1999, it has fallen to 5.5 percent of the Regular Fund. Therefore, the lack of quota payments and the reduced level of "other income" to finance the Regular Fund budget for the current year, as well as the year 2000, simply cannot continue.

I'm sure we do not wish to produce an adverse impact on the ability of the Secretariat to execute all the activities and mandates that we give it. I'd like to make a special appeal to member states to make an extra special effort to meet their budgetary quota allotments. So I would kindly request, Mr. Chairman, that my colleague permanent representatives adopt or take the necessary actions before their central governments to obtain as soon as possible all the quota payments due to the Organization or, as a minimum, a payment plan for quotas in arrears. In the view of the CAAP and its Chair, our situation is critical, and therefore every help that we can get at this moment would inure to the benefit of the institution.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank the Chair of the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP) for his report, and I ask that his words be considered. I now give the floor to the Secretary General.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL: Seré muy breve, señor Presidente. No solo quiero respaldar plenamente las afirmaciones que ha hecho el Embajador Hurst, de Antigua y Barbuda, sino agregar al cuadro que él ya ha descrito que debemos tener todos presente que los ingresos nominales de la Organización por concepto de cuotas están congelados. La administración tiene que hacerle frente a los incrementos salariales del sistema de las Naciones Unidas y a todo el incremento de otro tipo de gastos, y tiene que hacerlo tomando de una suma fija, que son las cuotas que recibimos y que han estado congeladas por los últimos..., ya vamos para el quinto año de tener las cuotas congeladas.

Estamos en una situación financiera realmente difícil, y si a eso le agregamos, como lo ha mostrado con cifras bastante contundentes el Embajador de Antigua y Barbuda, el retraso generalizado de los países en el pago de las cuotas, pues, cada vez la Organización tiene menos margen, cada vez tiene menos efectivo y podemos llegar a tener una situación muy, muy difícil en unas pocas semanas.

De manera que yo quiero agregar estas pocas palabras a la comprensiva presentación que el Embajador Hurst ha hecho. Gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Mr. Secretary General.

DAÑOS CAUSADOS POR EL HURACÁN FLOYD EN LAS BAHAMAS

El PRESIDENTE: I now bring to your attention a matter that occurred in The Bahamas. We will be distributing to you a full report on the devastation caused by Hurricane Floyd to sections of our family of islands. Unfortunately, the press in this area does not supply full reports on small territories that have experienced the kind of problems that we've had. You were able to see what happened in the United States as a result of winds of 70 miles per hour. In some areas, we were hit

by winds of 140 miles per hour. Certain settlements in The Bahamas that go back for centuries—for example a place in Abaco called Riding Rock—have been demolished. Many of our areas are without telephone, running water, or electricity. Many people can't get around because roads have been washed away.

Unfortunately, we have been unable until now to get to these areas in order to bring the situation to your attention. But we feel that you ought to be aware that buildings and roads have been damaged, and many cars and things of that sort have been destroyed.

We're fortunate that the loss of life has been kept to a minimum. We believe that casualties will not exceed three; there was one death, but two other deaths may have been indirectly caused by the hurricane.

We are concerned that there have been reports that we were charging agencies for coming into the country. You may have seen such reports on the Internet; that is not the case. We were being cautious about certain materials—for example, generators—being brought in to the country. Large numbers of generators were being brought in by private individuals, and that did cause a little bit of a problem, but that has been cleared up. We need roofing material, lumber, generators, and things of that sort. Anything assigned to the Government will come in duty free, but we are trying not to let private individuals bring items in and avoid paying the duty.

We hope that areas like San Salvador, Eleuthra, Abaco, and the east end of Grand Bahama will be operational in the near future. Tourism is still very active in our other areas. We've had very little damage to our hotels in New Providence and some damage to other private buildings, and so hotels are again accepting guests.

Our airport in Grand Bahama has been very seriously damaged, and so travel to Grand Bahama might be limited. But the airport and all the other facilities at New Providence are well under control.

We hope that, wherever possible, we will receive support. We've opened two accounts, one here in Washington and one in Miami, and we will be sending all of that information to our colleagues.

We're grateful that we have already received the funding available for assistance from the OAS, and we look forward to assistance from any member states. This is the first time that we have experienced a very serious natural disaster, and we hope that my bringing this to your attention will make you aware of how much we have suffered in recent days. We have not lost many lives, and we are thankful for that, but we are concerned about the immediate future.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I call on the distinguished Representative of Jamaica.

EL REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE JAMAICA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As Jamaica's High Commissioner to The Bahamas, I've been following the situation and I realize how serious the damage has been. I'd like to take this opportunity to reiterate the condolences expressed by the Government of Jamaica and to renew our pledge to assist in any way. Our efforts to assist

quickly would be substantially aided if we were able to get more detailed information from your government. In the meanwhile, there have been both government and private initiatives to assist, including Air Jamaica's being one of the first airlines to resume service to Nassau.

I reiterate our commitment to assist in any way possible. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank the distinguished Ambassador of Jamaica, who is also his country's High Commissioner to The Bahamas, for his remarks.

I now call on the distinguished Representative of Mexico.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE MÉXICO: Muchas gracias. Señor Presidente, en primer lugar quisiera agradecerle la información que usted ha presentado. Efectivamente, creo que lo que vivimos la semana pasada nos demuestra la desigualdad en el manejo de información, según el país o el territorio que en un momento es víctima de la naturaleza. Sin duda –y lo comentamos personalmente– las informaciones sobre las Bahamas fueron, por lo menos en varios medios de comunicación, prácticamente inexistentes.

En ese sentido creo que sería muy útil que, a través de su Misión, se nos mantenga informados, para que estemos en condiciones de informar a nuestros Gobiernos y al mismo tiempo considerar alguna posible iniciativa en el ámbito multilateral. Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you very much, Ambassador of Mexico. I now call on the distinguished Representative of Panama.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE PANAMÁ: Gracias, señor Presidente. De igual manera, como lo han hecho el Embajador de Jamaica y el Embajador de México, deseo también expresarle a usted, en mi condición de Embajador Concurrente de Panamá ante el Gobierno de la Mancomunidad de las Bahamas, mis sinceras condolencias por estos lamentables acontecimientos que han ocurrido en las Bahamas y, a la vez, expresarle toda la solidaridad y la cooperación de mi Gobierno para reparar en alguna manera los daños causados por el huracán que recientemente azotó su país. Nuevamente, pues, mis expresiones personales de solidaridad y las de mi Gobierno. Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you very much. I thank all who have spoken this morning and have offered help, also those who've called me and those who will call me. Our report is now available and will be distributed by the OAS to your missions.

There being no further business and no other requests for the floor, this meeting is adjourned.

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