

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA
CELEBRADA
EL 20 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2002

Aprobada en la sesión del 30 de abril de 2003

ÍNDICE

	<u>Página</u>
Nómina de los Representantes que asistieron a la sesión	1
Palabras de la Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores de Suriname	3

CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 20 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2002

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y veinticinco de la mañana del miércoles 20 de noviembre de 2002, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para recibir a la excelentísima señora Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Suriname. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador M. A. Odeen Ishmael, Representante Permanente de Guyana
Embajador Joshua Sears, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Embajador Valter Pecly Moreira, Representante Permanente del Brasil
Embajador Juan Enrique Fischer, Representante Permanente del Uruguay
Embajador Juan Manuel Castulovich, Representante Permanente de Panamá
Embajador Jorge Valero Briceño, Representante Permanente de Venezuela
Embajador Ramón Quiñones, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana
Embajador Eduardo Ferrero Costa, Representante Permanente del Perú
Embajador Henry Lothar Illes, Representante Permanente de Suriname
Embajador Rodolfo Hugo Gil, Representante Permanente de la Argentina
Embajador Luis Enrique Chase Plate, Representante Permanente del Paraguay
Embajador Salvador E. Rodezno Fuentes, Representante Permanente de Honduras
Embajador Arturo Romeo Duarte Ortiz, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Consejero Mackisack Logie, Representante Interino de Trinidad y Tobago
Ministro Consejero Ricardo Martínez Covarrubias, Representante Interino de Bolivia
Ministro Federico Meneses Espinosa, Representante Interino del Ecuador
Ministro Consejero Luis Menéndez Castro, Representante Interino de El Salvador
Consejero David L. Keithlin, Representante Interino del Canadá
Consejero Miguel Ángel González, Representante Interino de Chile
Ministro Jaime Casabianca Perdomo, Representante Interino de Colombia
Ministro Ernesto Campos Tenorio, Representante Interino de México
Primer Secretario Pierre Daniel Laviolette, Representante Alterno de Haití
Consejera Jasmine E. Huggins, Representante Alterna de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Embajador Luis Guardia Mora, Representante Alterno de Costa Rica
Ministro Consejero Nestor Mendez, Representante Alterno de Belice
Ministro Consejero Dwight Fitzgerald Bramble, Representante Alterno de
San Vicente y las Granadinas
Primera Secretaria Ann-Marie Layne Campbell, Representante Alterna de Antigua y Barbuda
Ministra Delrose E. Montague, Representante Alterna de Jamaica
Primera Secretaria Patricia D. M. Clarke, Representante Alterna de Grenada
Embajador Peter DeShazo, Representante Alterno de los Estados Unidos
Primera Secretaria Lisa R. Cummins, Representante Alterna de Barbados
Ministro Consejero Carlos A. Gomez, Representante Alterno de Nicaragua

También estuvo presente el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Luigi R. Einaudi, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

El PRESIDENTE: I call to order this special meeting of the Permanent Council, which has been convoked to receive the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname, Her Excellency Dr. Maria Levens. Madam Minister, on behalf of the Permanent Council, I am pleased to extend to you a very warm welcome to the House of the Americas.

Mr. Assistant Secretary General; ambassadors, permanent representatives; permanent observers; ladies and gentlemen:

Before offering the floor to our distinguished guest, let me give a brief summary of her career.

Dr. Levens holds a doctoral degree in social science and education from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands and has pursued training programs in higher education and educational technology in the United States.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname, Dr. Levens served as President of the Executive Board of the Council of Ministers of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group in Brussels from January to June 2001. In that capacity, she represented the Caribbean region in the preparation of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) during the ACP negotiations.

She has participated in various commissions, such as the Joint Suriname-Venezuela Commission of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before serving in her current position, Dr. Levens was Head of the Bureau of Educational Information, Scholarship and Exchange Programs of the Ministry of Education and Community Development and served as Policy Advisor to the Minister of Education, participating in various commissions on education and human resource development.

She has been a consultant to various international organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and has published various reports on education.

Dr. Levens has been engaged in civil society activities. She is member of and has chaired various nongovernmental organizations. Under the leadership of President Venetiaan, she strongly advocated civil society engagement in CARICOM affairs, as well as in Suriname.

Finally, it's worth noting that under her leadership, Suriname will be hosting the CARIFESTA VIII, the Caribbean Festival of Arts, in August 2003.

I am honored to give the floor to Dr. Levens, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

PALABRAS DE LA MINISTRA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE SURINAME

La MINISTRA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE SURINAME: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Assistant Secretary General, distinguished permanent representatives, distinguished alternate representatives, distinguished observers, staff of the General Secretariat, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly to today's august meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States and for affording me the opportunity to address you this morning.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with the Assistant Secretary General this morning. I have come from that meeting with deeper insight into the many challenges our organization faces, but I am equally convinced that the OAS will meet these challenges and find solutions, in keeping with its record.

I take this opportunity to commend Secretary General César Gaviria on behalf of the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Runaldo Ronald Venetiaan, for his ongoing and tireless efforts to restructure the OAS and to make it a more streamlined, effective, and efficient institution, ready to deal with the mandates of the Summit of the Americas process. The close ties between the agenda of the OAS, strictly defined by the Charter and its executing instruments, and the mandates of the Summit of the Americas make a clear and definite case for strong OAS involvement in the implementation of the Summit's mandates.

This organization will largely be judged by the outcome of its reforms. Therefore, my government finds it important that we create and implement reforms that ensure efficient and accurate implementation of all Summit mandates so that attention to the traditional programs and projects of the Organization will not be neglected.

In the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the groundbreaking document of the Millennium Summit of September 2000, world leaders clearly acknowledged that women's contribution to all important world issues is part of a broader change in the global understanding of the role of women in general. In this document, world leaders and heads of state not only reaffirmed the equal rights and opportunities of women and men; they also unanimously agreed to promote the empowerment of women and men. In addition, they agreed to promote the empowerment of women as an effective tool to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to truly stimulate and support sustainable development. This document points out that in the areas of development, peace, and security, no strategy will be effective in the long term unless women are completely involved.

Next Monday, on November 25, this Council will hold a special meeting on women's participation in political processes. I am very, very pleased that this issue has reached the agenda of the OAS. Women's empowerment and the full participation of women in political processes strengthen the ability of countries to grow, to reduce poverty, to govern safely, and to ensure human security. It has been demonstrated that countries that reduce gender inequality in such areas as politics, employment, education, health care, and property rights achieve significant rewards.

When we consider that women today make up approximately 40 percent of the global workforce—and thus a considerable percentage of the hemispheric workforce—it is very disappointing to see that they still face barriers when they try to reach the top. Today, there are more women in politics, for example, than ten years ago. There is no doubt that these women are making a notable difference, yet the statistics show that political life continues to be dominated by men. Representative democracy will therefore only be representative when all political actors, including the male-dominated political institutions, acknowledge that women's political skills and experiences can make valuable contributions to all important issues, not only to the social and economic agenda or to the so-called women's issues.

In this context, I would like to pledge Suriname's full support for the valuable work of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM). Last month, the principal delegates of this body gathered in the Dominican Republic and discussed, among many important topics, the issue of gender equality and the empowerment of women in this hemisphere.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are instant tools to combat poverty and disease and to achieve overall development that is truly sustainable, because we are equally determined to build on the contribution of women in managing conflict and building peace.

These are the exact words of the Secretary General of the United Nations, spoken at the commemoration of International Women's Day on March 8, 2002, the same day on which Suriname deposited the ratification instruments of the Convention of Belém do Pará here at the OAS.

Mr. Chairman, the current Government of Suriname has been in office for a little over two years now. At the beginning of his second term as Head of State of the Republic of Suriname, President Venetiaan made it very clear that his administration is determined to bring Suriname and its people back on the path of prosperity, growth, and development. The Government spares no efforts to address the issue of poverty alleviation. To that end, the administration has recently put in place stringent measures aimed at ameliorating the lot of the most needy in our society.

At the hemispheric level, we need to admit that more than 170 million of our population still live in poverty. The eradication of extreme poverty must, therefore, remain at the top of the OAS agenda.

The late Dr. Frank Essed, a well-known Surinamese scholar and statesman, defined three aspects of development with respect to small developing countries:

1. Our development is no restoration of the old colonial building of alien origin, but it is a new architecture of ourselves, based on the endowments of our own land and people.
2. Each architecture is based on a model design, made visual by map and description. This holds also for every realistic national development model.
3. Development is no addition of separate projects, but a multiplication of mutually interdependent components.

It is known that financially the OAS and many of its member states are having difficult times. It is a great misfortune that the resources made available to the Regular Fund of the OAS have been in decline for the past twenty years and that there is no immediate plan to alter that trend. The reasons for this phenomenon are many. While member states are making many efforts to alter this situation, the reality of the declining Voluntary Funds of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) must be addressed in the short term through external resources for the financing of development projects in the member states. The political and institutional framework of CIDI, therefore, needs further strengthening so that poverty alleviation can take a more central position in our development cooperation efforts. In this context, it is crucial that the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) be provided with the necessary human and financial resources to meet our expectations.

I understand that this Council is also working diligently on the modernization and reform of the practices, structures, and procedures of the OAS in order to enhance its capacity to deliver more efficiently on its many very important objectives and goals. We applaud this endeavor; it is a healthy sign of adjustment to the new challenges. I wish you the greatest success in these noble efforts.

The struggle for human rights is the struggle of those in our member states without power. The Surinamese Government, therefore, attaches much importance to the two hemispheric human rights institutions, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. My government firmly believes that for this process to be carried out successfully and efficiently, the monitoring of human rights is essential in the Americas by all treaty bodies, as well as by national and regional civil society organizations in every member state. We note with great pleasure the constantly growing and increasingly active participation of such organizations in the work of the OAS. These institutions are indispensable in order to increase the effectiveness of the promotion and protection of human rights and to add to the effectiveness of the work in which we are engaged.

Mr. Chairman, next week, on November 25, the Republic of Suriname will celebrate its 27th year of independence, and this year we commemorate our 25th anniversary of membership in the OAS. Today, as I am gratefully utilizing the opportunity the Permanent Council has graciously provided me, allow me to reflect on the relationship between the Republic of Suriname and the Organization of American States and try to capture the spirit of this relationship.

The authority, reach, and strength of this organization and its acceptance by the people of Suriname were never more manifest than when we had to go through the gravest ordeal of our young nation: the violent overthrow of a democratically elected government and the subsequent systematic and gross violation of human rights. The OAS was ready to cooperate with the democratic forces of Suriname to restore belief in the democratic process through free and fair elections and to protect this process through strengthening of our democratic institutions. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) played a pivotal role in this exemplary form of cooperation.

The Suriname-OAS experience has been a recordable success. The interaction produced a healthier environment for viable democracy in Suriname and contributed to a strengthening of the Charter of the OAS.

Mr. Chairman, against this background, it is clear that Suriname has a lasting interest in the Organization of American States, its goals, and its achievements. We will continue to make every

effort to meet our obligations and to support the Organization's programs, because their successful outcome will fulfill so many of the hopes and dreams of the people of this hemisphere.

I thank you.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you, Madam Minister, for your inspiring and very interesting presentation. I wish to assure you that your remarks about the special meeting of the Permanent Council on women's participation in political processes will be conveyed to that meeting, which will be held on Monday coming.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to congratulate you and your government on your country's 27th anniversary of independence and to wish you continued success. Thank you very much.

There being no further issues, this meeting stands adjourned.

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