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ACTA  
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA  
CELEBRADA  
EL 11 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2002

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## CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

### ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 11 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2002

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y cuarenta de la mañana del miércoles 11 de diciembre de 2002, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para recibir a los representantes de los países africanos. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajadora Sonia Merlyn Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía  
Embajador Joshua Sears, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas  
Embajador Valter Peclly Moreira, Representante Permanente del Brasil  
Embajador Esteban Tomic Errázuriz, Representante Permanente de Chile  
Embajador Miguel Ruíz Cabañas, Representante Permanente de México  
Embajador Jorge Valero Briceño, Representante Permanente de Venezuela  
Embajador Ellsworth I. A. John, Representante Permanente de San Vicente y las Granadinas  
Embajador Ramón Quiñones, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana  
Embajador Eduardo Ferrero Costa, Representante Permanente del Perú  
Embajador Rodolfo H. Gil, Representante Permanente de la Argentina  
Embajador Salvador E. Rodezno Fuentes, Representante Permanente de Honduras  
Embajador Arturo Duarte Ortiz, Representante Permanente de Guatemala  
Embajador Leandro Marín Abaunza, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua  
Ministro Consejero Ricardo Martínez Covarrubias, Representante Interino de Bolivia  
Ministro Federico Meneses Espinosa, Representante Interino del Ecuador  
Embajador Luis Guardia Mora, Representante Interino de Costa Rica  
Segundo Secretario Álvaro Díaz de Vivar, Representante Alterno del Paraguay  
Consejera Jasmine E. Huggins, Representante Alterna de Saint Kitts y Nevis  
Ministro Jaime Casabianca Perdomo, Representante Alterno de Colombia  
Segunda Secretaria Anne-Tamara Lorre, Representante Alterna del Canadá  
Primera Secretaria Ann-Marie Layne Campbell, Representante Alterna de Antigua y Barbuda  
Ministra Delrose E. Montague, Representante Alterna de Jamaica  
Embajador Ricardo González de Mena, Representante Alterno de Panamá  
Primera Secretaria Patricia D. M. Clarke, Representante Alterna de Grenada  
Ministro Consejero Jorge A. Sere Sturzenegger, Representante Alterno del Uruguay  
Embajador Peter DeShazo, Representante Alterno de los Estados Unidos

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

El PRESIDENTE: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I call to order this special meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American states, which brings the permanent representatives to the OAS together with the permanent observers to the OAS and the representatives of the African countries to the United States.

Many are the ties that bind the histories of the nations of the Americas with those of Africa, and it is fitting that we seek to dialogue on issues of common concern. On behalf of the Permanent Council, I am honored to welcome so many ambassadors from the African continent. We are pleased that you have accepted this invitation and would like you to feel at home in this House of the Americas. This meeting will address the topics of cooperation for development, trade and development, and democracy and human rights, and I look forward to an enriching discussion.

#### PALABRAS DE BIENVENIDA DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO

El PRESIDENTE: It is with great pleasure that I now give the floor to Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, Assistant Secretary General, who is in charge of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Your Excellency Ambassador Denis Antoine, Chair of the Permanent Council and Permanent Representative of Grenada to the Organization of American States; His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Dean of the diplomatic corps in Washington of the African countries and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States; ambassadors, permanent representatives and permanent observers to the OAS; ambassadors and representatives of the African countries to the United States:

I extend a special welcome to you to this House of the Americas in the name of Secretary General Gaviria and in my own name. Dr. Gaviria, with whom I spoke the other day, regrets not being able to enjoy this opportunity today. He remains in Venezuela, working to develop a peaceful and democratic outcome to the current tensions in Venezuela.

I express sincere appreciation to Ambassador Antoine for his initiative in bringing about our unique encounter today. I thank the African permanent observers to the OAS for their contribution to this initiative, which we hope will set an example not only for us, but also for others. Perhaps this initiative will lead to further follow-up once specific and concrete common problems and opportunities are identified in the course of our dialogue.

I would like to comment very briefly on three topics, primarily from an institutional point of view: democracy and human rights, cooperation and development, and trade. Particularly over the past decade, the OAS has made determined progress toward consolidating a democratic vocation. It has addressed and helped resolve a series of political and institutional crises affecting several of the Hemisphere's states and has facilitated negotiations for resolving a variety of disputes among its members. These various undertakings have led to the OAS being considered "the principal hemispheric body for the defense of democratic values and institutions," in the words of the

presidents and heads of government of the Hemisphere in the Miami Plan of Action less than 10 years ago.

Recent amendments to the Charter have made this organization the only multilateral body that has representative democracy at its core. The Charter now provides that “representative democracy is an indispensable condition for the stability, peace, and development of the region.” A series of declarations and resolutions have gradually developed what I would call a body of regional jurisprudence and practice. The latest step in this process was the adoption last year of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

In 1991, General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 1080 (XXI-O/91) made the first operational breakthrough from hortatory rhetoric to actual practice, but resolution 1080 did not specify what constituted an interruption in the democratic process that would justify collective action. Unfortunately, most threats to democracy do not take the form of a military coup; nor, on the other side of the ledger, does the fact that a government is elected mean that all of its actions will necessarily be democratic.

Article 3 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter fills this conceptual void by defining what it characterizes as “the essential elements” of representative democracy. I quote from Article 3:

. . . respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, access to and the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage . . . the pluralistic system of political parties and organizations, and the separation of powers and independence of the branches of government.

The OAS has conducted more than fifty electoral observation missions, mainly over this past decade, through its Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) and provides technical assistance to member states in executing projects to strengthen public institutions and promote democratic values and practices.

In addition, the OAS, with the valuable support of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), is responsible for a special program that is working to free Central America of land mines. In fact, a ceremony was held yesterday in Costa Rica to mark the complete removal of all antipersonnel mines from that member state.

Within the framework of promoting democracy, the OAS is managing the Inter-American Program for Cooperation in the Fight against Corruption and is active not only in encouraging countries to ratify the Convention, but also in approving mechanisms for harmonizing national legislations and implementing the legal instrument.

The inter-American human rights system was born in Bogotá, Colombia, in April of 1948 with the adoption of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, the first international human rights instrument of its kind. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) was created in 1959 and is the principal organ of the OAS mandated to protect and promote human rights in the Americas. The creation of a special body to oversee the situation of human rights in the

Americas was an expression of the commitment of the member states to a system of freedom for the individual and social justice. The Commission is composed of seven members nominated by member states and elected by the General Assembly of the OAS to four-year terms that may be renewed once. These members serve in their personal capacity; therefore, they are meant to and encouraged to act independently of their countries, which, in fact, they do not represent. They are held to represent all of the member states of the Organization. The Commission's independence is further guaranteed by the fact that it is supported by its own executive secretariat, which is separate from the General Secretariat.

Although the Commission at once began receiving individual petitions alleging human rights violations committed by member states, it was not granted the authority to examine such complaints until 1965. In its early years, the Commission focused upon investigating the general human rights situation in particular states in an effort to identify appropriate measures. It used its statutory authority to hold meetings in any member state of the Organization as the basis for a power that it claimed on its own, at the time, to conduct on-site investigations in OAS member states. These fact-finding investigations and the ensuing country or special reports that the Commission presented to the General Assembly became the most significant activity of the Commission during the first years of its history.

With the entry into force of the American Convention on Human Rights and the establishment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, individual complaint procedures began to acquire greater prominence. The Commission has held 115 sessions; some of them at its headquarters, others in different countries of the Americas. It has established special rapporteurships—positions of special rapporteur—to better address a series of issues: freedom of expression, the rights of women, the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of children, the situation of migrant workers and their families, prison conditions, and the rights of displaced persons.

In conjunction with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the OAS is working toward the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by the year 2005. The Trade Unit was created quite recently, in 1995, as part of the OAS's response to mandates from the First Summit of the Americas. The program objectives of the Trade Unit, which is headed currently by a former minister of trade of Costa Rica, fall under three main areas that address trade and development concerns: the activities related to the negotiations of the FTAA; capacity building and training; and the dissemination of trade-related information, much of it through the Foreign Trade Information System (SICE), a computerized system of trade data.

The Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) has been designed to provide an operational complement to the OAS's role. Its specific functions include mobilizing human and financial resources and encouraging the planning and implementation of cooperation projects in areas related to the institutional strengthening of member states and the development of human resources. The Third Summit of the Americas explicitly recognized the role of the Agency, and I think that there is general hope that this new body will prove capable of leveraging additional resources to increase its capacity to help meet the development objectives of member states.

To conclude, I would like to mention that I have had a chance to meet with one of my counterparts from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Both organizations face numerous

common problems, from ensuring unity among a highly diverse membership to questions of management and resources.

The OAS has only one Assistant Secretary General, and he is elected by the entire membership. I myself am the first U.S. citizen in over 40 years to be elected to this position, which had previously been held by citizens of the relatively smaller countries of Central America and the Caribbean. I have pledged that I will only serve one term. The OAU, in contrast, has several assistant secretaries-general—I believe five—and they are chosen explicitly to guarantee subregional representation.

There are thus many issues, from theory to practice, on which we could discuss our respective approaches. I suspect, however, that there is one area in which we would agree; namely, that the search for democracy in a world of sovereign but interdependent states is vital, and that it is as important to strive for democracy among countries as it is to strive for it within them.

Thank you very much.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador Einaudi.

#### PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: Mr. Assistant Secretary General; Your Excellency Roble Olhaye, Dean of the representatives of the African countries, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States, and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Djibouti to the United Nations; ambassadors, permanent representatives; permanent observers; ambassadors and representatives of the African continent to the United States:

Once again I welcome every one of you to the Hall of the Americas and to the first meeting of the OAS permanent representatives and permanent observers with the representatives of the countries of Africa to the United States.

It is a pleasure to see an idea conceived by the permanent observers of Africa to the OAS and by the Chair become a reality. We have an opportunity to start a very productive dialogue, thanks to the initiative, cooperation, and support of the members of this Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. Most great ideas are never at their full force when they begin, so do not be discouraged by the attendance this morning; it is still a great beginning.

First, I would like to comment on the main activities of the OAS on matters related to trade in the Western Hemisphere. As you may know, at the First Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in December 1994, the heads of state of 34 member states of the OAS resolved to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in which barriers to trade and investment among the participating countries would be progressively eliminated. The goal is to conclude these negotiations by 2005. In 1995, in response to these requisites, the Secretary General of the OAS created the OAS Trade Unit, which has the following objectives:

- to provide technical support to the FTAA processes;
- to study the various aspects of hemispheric trade relations;
- to ensure effective coordination with regional and subregional integration organizations; and
- to strengthen the provision of trade information.

One of the most effective ways of helping the smaller economies of the Americas become better prepared for negotiations is through cooperation and training. Over the past five years and in keeping with the requests and mandates of our heads of state and government and our ministers, the OAS's trade-related capacity-building activities have expanded to include a wide range of actions in support of OAS member states.

Capacity-building needs and levels of development vary significantly among OAS member states; accordingly, the Trade Unit seeks to establish more region-driven trade-capacity-building frameworks by supporting countries in drafting national trade-related capacity-building strategies. This involves supporting countries in defining, articulating, and prioritizing trade-related needs with regard to preparing for negotiations, implementing trade commitments, and adjusting to integration.

This approach has implications for the trade and development activities of the OAS Trade Unit, particularly in light of the challenges that the region faces, such as the limited resources available in the context of intense trade negotiation processes, the implementation of existing obligations, and the need to increase trade and investment.

The Trade Unit also promotes inter-institutional cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and other international and regional organizations.

Let me highlight that the OAS's Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) has been strengthened and transformed into an instrument of transparency about hemispheric integration and trade trends. SICE facilitates access to the texts of trade agreements, policies and legislation in key areas, statistics, analytical articles and other trade-related documents, as well as direct links to the main trade-related websites within and outside of the Americas.

The Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) is the OAS's leading entity dealing with important cooperation and development issues. The Agency disburses \$16 to \$17 million yearly on development cooperation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. With these funds, the Agency supports multinational and national initiatives.

In addition, with the support of the United States of America, the Agency has developed the Educational Portal of the Americas, an online tool that contributes to a knowledge-based society by increasing opportunities for quality education and training through distance learning.

The Agency now seeks to promote horizontal cooperation between OAS member states through its best practices programs. This initiative, especially through its Government Procurement, E-Government, and Municipal Development programs, seeks to identify successful practices in the region and to facilitate their adaptation and potential application in other member states. Support by the Agency for activities in the area of trade and integration range from capacity building to inter-American port security.

The Agency's best practices programs include themes related to democracy and governance at the national and subregional levels.

The E-Government Program is designed to catalyze initiatives and provide governments with integral support at every stage of the implementation process. The application of best practices in e-government development is an innovative approach aimed at accelerating the process of modernization through the efficient use of scarce public resources and at mitigating potential risks by utilizing proven solutions.

The Government Procurement Program supports the governments of the region in their efforts to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency in government procurement operations. This program assists OAS member states in their efforts to reform and modernize the state, reduce corruption, strengthen democratic governance, and foster economic growth and development. In addition, this program facilitates the participation of small business in government procurement and in other forms of e-commerce in order to increase employment and decrease poverty.

The Municipal Development Program provides technical assistance and training to local governments to help them to increase managerial and technical skills for the provision of public services. The focal areas of the Program include the modernization of cadastral systems, e-government applied at the municipal level, and management of water and sanitation services.

The challenges of the IACD in better meeting the development needs of OAS member states include:

- Improved responses to the principal development priorities of OAS member states, taking particular account of the needs of smaller and more vulnerable economies of the region;
- Enhanced participation by all member states in the programming process, especially via sharing the expertise of their national institutions;
- The establishment of mutually reinforcing programs so as to operate in a more integrated manner;
- The development of higher-impact, results-based, multiyear programs to facilitate the leveraging of external resources; and
- The establishment of more interactive mechanisms with national development agencies.

Human rights and democracy are also critical elements of the inter-American agenda. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is one of the fundamental organs of the

OAS. The Commission's individual petition system is the central point of its work program. The number of petitions submitted to the Commission in 1997 was 458; in 1998, it was 607; and by September 2002, it rose to 4,098. This shows the importance of the work done by the Commission during the past five years, in which approximately 946 cases have been processed. In 2002, the Commission has 936 cases pending.

In past years, the Commission has considered very different types of cases, such as illegal detention and arrest; disappearances; extrajudicial executions; and violations of the rights to asylum, to political participation, and to property.

As part of the responsibility for observing the general human rights situation in OAS member states, the Commission conducts on-site investigations. Since its beginnings in 1959, there have been approximately 84 on-site visits. In serious and urgent cases, and whenever necessary, according to the information available, the Commission may, on its own initiative or upon request by a party, request that the state concerned adopt precautionary measures to prevent irreparable harm to persons.

In the past five years, the Commission granted 260 precautionary measures. Of these, 103 are still active. The number of precautionary measures granted does not necessarily reflect the number of persons protected when measures are adopted, since on many occasions several persons or entire communities receive protection. The measures have helped, and an important number of lives have been saved.

Other functions of the Commission are to submit cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and to request advisory opinions from the Court regarding questions of interpretation of human rights treaties and conventions. In pursuit of justice and appropriate reparations, the Commission brought 48 cases to the Court. The Court's jurisdiction has been mainly utilized as a mechanism for justice in the case of disappearances, as well as arbitrary detention, lack of due process, and extrajudicial executions. The Court is competent to make binding determinations regarding states' responsibilities.

The link between human rights and the strengthening of democratic institutions is especially critical. The countries of the Hemisphere recognize that representative democracy is essential for peace, justice, and development. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) has provided technical assistance to an array of democratic institutions for more than 12 years. The activities of the Unit include:

- electoral assistance and observation;
- promotion of democratic values and culture;
- pacific resolution of conflicts;
- support for decentralization efforts and strengthening of local governments; and
- assistance to legislatures.

The latest addition to the UPD's mission is the provision of support to political parties as a vital actor in the democratic process.

As Chairman of the Permanent Council, I view with satisfaction the evolution of the Organization of American States in the defense and promotion of democracy over the last twelve years. I am particularly heartened by our efforts over the last year, which culminated in the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter on September 11, 2001. In doing so, OAS member states agreed to "review periodically the actions adopted and carried out by the Organization to promote dialogue, cooperation for integral development, and the fight against poverty in the Hemisphere, and to take the appropriate measures to further these objectives." They further agreed that "the exercise of democracy promotes the preservation and good stewardship of the environment" and that "it is essential that the states of the Hemisphere implement policies and strategies to protect the environment, including the application of various treaties and conventions, to achieve sustainable development for the benefit of future generations." Similarly, the member states recognized that "education is key to strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the development of human potential, and alleviating poverty and fostering greater understanding among our peoples."

I thank you for listening.

PALABRAS DEL EXCELENTÍSIMO SEÑOR ROBLE OLHAYE,  
EMBAJADOR EXTRAORDINARIO Y PLENIPOTENCIARIO  
DE LA REPÚBLICA DE DJIBOUTI  
ANTE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA Y  
DECANO DE LOS REPRESENTANTES DE LOS PAÍSES AFRICANOS

El PRESIDENTE: It is now an honor for me to give the floor to the Dean of the representatives of the African countries, His Excellency Roble Olhaye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Djibouti to the United States and Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

El EMBAJADOR EXTRAORDINARIO Y PLENIPOTENCIARIO DE LA REPÚBLICA DE DJIBOUTI ANTE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMERICA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Assistant Secretary General, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

I cannot match the length and depth of the statement that has been delivered by my colleague to my right. I'll try to be brief so that we'll have an opportunity to dialogue on the objectives of today's meeting.

At the outset, I wish to express to you, Mr. Chairman, the appreciation and the deep gratitude of the African ambassadors and of the entire African diplomatic corps for this unique initiative that brings us together today for the first time under one roof here in Washington, D.C. At the end of the day, the symbolism of this encounter is clearly far more important than any possible outcome.

The purpose of this initial meeting is to explore ways and means of strengthening and enhancing our shared common interests on issues as they relate to cooperation for development, trade,

democracy, and human rights. I have no doubt that we shall be able to find many critical areas of common concern to us all and that require further dialogue and contact.

The countries in this hemisphere have made substantial progress in the improvement of their economies in recent decades. You also possess some of the world's largest and most diversified economies, high levels of private investment and trade, and impressive examples of both real and potential economic growth and development. This is not to say that there are no fluctuations in your business cycle, real snags in human and capital development, or persistence of poverty in a number of countries.

Mr. Chairman, our aim in Africa is to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with a view to being gradually integrated into the global economy. With its expanding population, abundant resources, and growth potential, Africa presents a necessary market for the economies of countries in this hemisphere.

To be sure, we are not short of impediments or constraints to development. Facing the challenges of globalization, development, and good governance as separate or individual countries, we have come to understand, is a recipe for economic and social disaster. Given the colonial legacy of many balkanized, small, and marginally viable economic entities, African development must in some respects be approached both from subregional and continental perspectives.

The new African Union (AU), which replaces the 40-year-old Organisation of African Unity (OAU), together with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), bring new impetus, commitments, and enhanced determination on the part of our leaders to tackle pernicious political, economic, and developmental problems that for too long militated against realistic progress in Africa. Most of all, however, these new entities demonstrate that African leaders have accepted their collective need and responsibility in addressing Africa's ills. The continent can now challenge authoritarian regimes that demonstrate a lack of respect for human and democratic rights. Over time, there can be improved coordination to resolve conflicts and to combat natural disasters and the effects of health crises, such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Subregional trade blocks, in anticipation of an emerging continental trade association, will provide positive internal and foreign investment opportunities and wider markets.

With these and other measures, Africa will be in a much stronger position to tackle perhaps its most critical problem—poverty—which limits the ability of governments and businesses to provide the acceptable level of employment, service, infrastructure, and investment required for consistent growth.

Mr. Chairman, the historical links between Africa and the countries of this hemisphere go back several centuries, primarily through the infamous institution of slavery. As a result, most, if not all, of your countries have citizens, some in the majority, who are of African ancestry. Also, many countries in Africa and in this hemisphere share the same colonial history, a legacy that is today demonstrated by common memberships in the Francophone Bloc, the Commonwealth, and the Hispanic and Lusophone countries.

Pressures during the Cold War era, coupled with sheer common sense for survival, have caused us to pull together under common organizations like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); the

Group of 77 (G-77); and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) Group of States. Despite the many disparities in the size of our economies and relative levels of development and growth, the common membership of most of us in the large, unofficial group of developing countries offers us key additional opportunities for cooperation, trade, and investment.

Poverty, ill health, and economic stagnation are prevalent to varying degrees in our countries. With the Millennium Declaration and its goals, the international community has accepted a number of targets and deadlines designed to correct these imbalances, particularly that of worldwide poverty.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that over the past months, several major summits have focused on current developments in both our regions. These events include the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in March; the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada, in June, during which NEPAD featured as a major issue on the agenda; and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September.

As I promised, Mr. Chairman, I'll be brief. Together, we can look also into ways of cooperating in the field of democracy and human rights. Cooperation in the war on terrorism is crucial, as this threat could weaken international institutions directly and indirectly and fragment societies and economies around the world. We must also take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. Together, we must also strengthen support for the new International Criminal Court (ICC) and cooperate in protecting the rights of women, children, refugees, and other defenseless people in our respective regions.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me say that this is a wonderful occasion that we need to build upon. At the minimum, knowing one another better here in Washington, networking, enhancing mutual and bilateral relations, attending each other's functions and events, and improving diplomatic contacts will no doubt result in benefits to all of us. Let us do that.

Once again, on behalf of my colleagues, I offer you, Mr. Chairman, our deep gratitude for your exemplary efforts and our full recognition of your wisdom and resourcefulness.

I thank you all. Thank you.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Ambassador, for your very thoughtful and interesting presentation.

#### COMENTARIOS DE LAS DELEGACIONES Y LOS INVITADOS ESPECIALES

El PRESIDENTE: Ladies and gentlemen, representatives, I now offer the floor to any delegations or special guests that may wish to comment. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Argentina.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE LA ARGENTINA: Gracias, señor Presidente. Quisiera, en primer lugar, felicitarlo por esta iniciativa de diálogo con los distinguidos representantes de los países africanos. Una iniciativa de esta naturaleza nos permite colocar a nuestra Organización en una perspectiva universal, ya que nos ayuda a entender que los desafíos que enfrentamos en

América para consolidar el desarrollo de nuestros pueblos no son exclusivos de nuestra región, sino que también son compartidos por otras regiones del mundo. En África y en América los gobiernos y la sociedad civil intentan, día a día, encontrar mecanismos que permitan mejorar sustantivamente la calidad de sus democracias, el respeto pleno de los derechos humanos y el desarrollo de sus pueblos con justicia social.

La relación plena de este trinomio que constituye la democracia, el pleno respeto de los derechos humanos y el desarrollo es el gran desafío que tanto África como América tienen durante el siglo que recién iniciamos.

En cuanto a la democracia, este es el primer momento en la historia moderna –resalto, es el primer momento– en que los 34 Estados de la Organización de los Estados Americanos cuentan con democracias representativas en pleno funcionamiento, más allá de las deficiencias de algunos modelos. En tal sentido, la acción de la OEA desde 1991, a través de la resolución AG/RES. 1080 (XXI-O/91), y 1992, mediante el Protocolo de Washington, vino a reforzar la noción por la cual la plena vigencia de las instituciones democráticas en un determinado Estado Miembro no es exclusivamente una cuestión nacional sino también, y fundamentalmente, hemisférica; por ello se crearon los mecanismos mencionados anteriormente.

Sin embargo, los mecanismos fueron pensados para rupturas tradicionales del orden democrático, o sea, los golpes de Estado. Estos mecanismos se renovaron y reforzaron adaptándose a las nuevas circunstancias. La reciente adopción y puesta en práctica de la Carta Democrática Interamericana es un hito en esta tendencia.

Con referencia a los derechos humanos existe un cambio sustantivo en el contexto de nuestro hemisferio. Ningún Estado Miembro cuenta con un gobierno que lleve a cabo una violación sistemática de los derechos humanos de sus habitantes, como ocurrió con el drama que vivimos durante gran parte de la década de los años ochentas. La vinculación entre la democracia y el respeto a los derechos humanos en el actual contexto hemisférico es esencial. El sistema democrático como sistema político es el que mejor garantiza la vigencia de los derechos fundamentales del hombre.

En consecuencia, del mismo modo que se refuerzan los mecanismos de defensa de la democracia para enfrentar nuevas circunstancias, deben renovarse y reforzarse los mecanismos de protección de los derechos humanos, tanto a nivel de nuestros países como a nivel regional, para enfrentar los nuevos desafíos, que son, la violencia, la impunidad, la falta de independencia del Poder Judicial, la falta de protección de los derechos económicos y sociales, la dación de justicia tardía, etcétera.

Asimismo, el trinomio se completa al entender que la vigencia de la democracia y la protección de las libertades fundamentales son, ambas, condiciones necesarias para el desarrollo económico y social. La OEA también lo entendió así en 1992 al incluir en el Protocolo de Washington el combate a la pobreza crítica y a la discriminación como propósito central de nuestra Organización, instituyendo el concepto de cooperación solidaria para el desarrollo, tema que también está recogido en la Carta Democrática.

Este es otro aspecto que merece un refuerzo y una renovación. La OEA debe equiparar la atención que le brinda a la cooperación para el desarrollo al nivel de profundidad y dedicación con que cuentan los temas de democracia y derechos humanos.

En síntesis, el ya mentado trinomio de democracia, desarrollo y respeto a los derechos humanos no debe ser una composición meramente retórica, debe expresarse en acciones concretas de los Estados para fortalecer cada uno de estos elementos, que son esenciales para el bienestar de nuestros pueblos.

Entre los numerosos desafíos comunes a nuestras regiones me gustaría, por razones de tiempo, solamente destacar los siguientes. El primero de esos desafíos es cambiar el paradigma que impregna la concepción democrática. La falta de vigencia plena de instituciones democráticas en muchos de nuestros países en el pasado nos llevó, naturalmente, a concentrarnos, cuando recuperamos la democracia, en garantizar la presencia y continuidad de elecciones periódicas, libres y transparentes en nuestros países. Sin embargo, debemos ir mucho más allá. Ya no se trata de preguntarnos si tenemos o no democracia. Ahora debemos preguntarnos cuál es la calidad de la democracia que tenemos.

En ese sentido, un elemento esencial sería fortalecer en nuestras regiones un cambio de paradigma democrático que reemplace la concepción de la persona como simple elector con el de la persona como verdadero ciudadano, titular de derechos inalienables por su condición de ser humano, que debe ejercer, y cuyo respeto el Estado debe garantizar.

El segundo desafío es lograr que los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales tengan el mismo nivel de protección que los derechos civiles y políticos. En ese sentido, tenemos mucho que aprender de África. La Carta Africana de los Derechos Humanos y de los Pueblos es el único instrumento regional en el mundo de los derechos humanos que incluye, en el mismo nivel y en un mismo tratado, tanto los derechos civiles y políticos como los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales, permitiendo la presentación de denuncias de los individuos para todos y cada uno de los derechos protegidos. Esta característica tan particular ya fue objeto de una decisión histórica de la Comisión Africana de Derechos Humanos en el año 2001, en un caso sobre la aplicación directa de los derechos económicos, sociales y culturales.

Este es un cambio sustantivo que permitió que el sistema regional africano hiciera realidad la concepción de indivisibilidad de los derechos humanos, lo que, en el ámbito de otras regiones y en el universal, no se ha logrado aún concretar.

En nuestro sistema interamericano aún existe un tratamiento diferente para ambas categorías de derechos y están contenidos en instrumentos separados, y unos pueden ser objeto de denuncias de los individuos y otros no lo pueden ser. Tanto los países a nivel interno como los sistemas regionales de protección de derechos humanos deben tender a esta indivisibilidad de los derechos humanos, en la teoría y en la práctica, que África supo plasmar en su Carta de 1987.

Por último, el tercer desafío que me gustaría recalcar es el fortalecimiento de la democracia elevando la calidad de vida de nuestros habitantes. Si no combatimos la creciente pobreza en nuestros países y adoptamos medidas concretas que permitan obtener justicia y equidad social a la gran mayoría de nuestras poblaciones, podríamos poner en jaque a las instituciones democráticas que recuperamos con su esfuerzo y sacrificio.

El fortalecimiento de la democracia lo debemos hacer en el marco de una globalización creciente, que nos lleva no solamente a tomar conciencia de las bondades de la democracia, el respeto de las libertades fundamentales y el libre comercio, sin también a ser víctimas de la transnacionalización de flagelos como el terrorismo, el narcotráfico o enfermedades como el SIDA.

En síntesis, en el marco de sus respectivas diversidades, señor Presidente, África y América tienen valores, problemáticas, intereses y desafíos comunes. Por ello, celebramos su decisión de sentarnos a dialogar con los dignos representantes de las naciones africanas, en una reunión que consideramos de suma importancia y trascendencia para ambas regiones.

Muchas gracias.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador. May I please remind our guests that a microphone and speaker button are before each of you. If you press the button you can get attention, or raise your hand if you do not have a button before you. In addition, there is interpretation in all four official languages.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE MÉXICO: Muchas gracias, señor Presidente. Yo también le agradezco y celebro esta iniciativa suya, como Presidente de nuestro Consejo, de celebrar esta sesión extraordinaria con los observadores permanentes de los países de África. También quiero darle la bienvenida por parte de esta Delegación al Embajador de la República de Djibouti, don Roble Olhaye. Hemos disfrutado –digo sin exagerar: hemos disfrutado– sus observaciones iniciales, porque creo que destacó en forma, por demás elocuente, cómo los países de nuestra región y los países de África compartimos desafíos, aspiraciones y esperanzas.

Me parece, señor Presidente, que además esta es una práctica que se debería institucionalizar. En el marco de las Naciones Unidas tienen lugar reuniones entre el grupo de países africanos y el grupo latinoamericano y del Caribe. Pero, como señaló el Embajador Olhaye, la especificidad en Washington de nuestras reuniones pudiera ser también útil para desarrollar la cooperación.

En efecto, señor Presidente, nos unen las mismas aspiraciones, esperanzas y desafíos. Ya mi colega el Embajador de Argentina se refirió a varias de ellas. Yo quisiera sintetizar cuál creo que pudiera ser el beneficio concreto de este tipo de reuniones. Desde luego, compartimos desafíos y aspiraciones en materia de desarrollo económico y social; desde luego, compartimos desafíos y aspiraciones en materia de protección efectiva de los derechos humanos; desde luego, compartimos las mismas aspiraciones en materia de consolidación de la democracia; estamos unidos por los mismos valores de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

¿Cómo podemos compartir experiencias, información, para tratar de desarrollar nuestras capacidades, a nivel nacional, a nivel subregional y a nivel regional, para participar de una manera más eficaz en el proceso de la globalización a nivel internacional? Sí creo que podríamos beneficiarnos concretamente del intercambio de experiencias y del intercambio de información sobre cómo fortalecernos y fortalecer a nuestras instituciones con ese intercambio de experiencias.

Es mucho lo que puede aprender una región de otra, en áreas concretas. Tanto el señor Secretario General Adjunto, el Embajador Einaudi, como usted han mencionado una serie de capacidades que tiene nuestra Organización, y creo que, por supuesto, es mucho también lo que se puede aprender de los países africanos en ese sentido.

Déjeme darle tres áreas concretas en las cuales creo que pudiéramos mejorar el intercambio de información y experiencias. En el área de seguridad, entendida en el sentido amplio como se hizo en la Declaración de Bridgetown aprobada en la última sesión de la Asamblea General en Barbados, donde la Organización de los Estados Americanos aprobó un enfoque multidimensional de la seguridad que va más allá de los enfoques tradicionales. Me parece que este es un paso significativo que dimos en nuestra región recientemente y que espero se vea reflejado en la Conferencia Especial sobre Seguridad que se celebrará en mi país, México, en mayo próximo.

En segundo lugar, y ya lo mencionaron en forma por demás elocuente también usted, el Embajador Einaudi y el Embajador de la Argentina, creo que es mucho lo que pudiéramos aprender del sistema africano de protección y promoción de los derechos humanos. Quizá pudiéramos pensar más adelante en alguna reunión temática en ese sentido para intercambiar experiencias exitosas en este campo.

Y en tercer lugar, señor Presidente, desde luego, todo lo que son nuestros esfuerzos y los esfuerzos de África para promover la cooperación para el desarrollo. Me parece que en nuestra región tenemos esta experiencia novedosa del establecimiento de la Agencia Interamericana para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo (AICD), pero sobre todo creo que pudiéramos compartir experiencias con África a través no solo de la Organización de los Estados Americanos sino de las instituciones hermanas, y estoy pensando en especial en el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID).

Señor Presidente, el distinguido Embajador Roble Olhaye también se refirió a la Conferencia de Monterrey. A mí me parece, señor Presidente, que este fue un acontecimiento significativo porque lo que hizo la Conferencia de Monterrey es dar nacimiento a un nuevo paradigma en materia de cooperación para el desarrollo. Creo que África y América Latina y el Caribe podrían beneficiarse enormemente del intercambio de información y experiencias en la aplicación concreta, en la práctica, de los avances que se logren en la implementación del Consenso de Monterrey. Nuestro sistema tiene una serie de capacidades, no solo de promoción para el desarrollo, sino en el área política y social, como son las instituciones en materia de promoción de la democracia, los derechos humanos y la lucha contra la corrupción, que hacen que el Consenso de Monterrey tenga posibilidades reales de aplicarse en nuestra región. Me parece que sería un área muy interesante para intercambiar información y experiencias con los países de África.

En resumen, señor Presidente, y para finalizar, no solo alentaría la continuación de este tipo de reuniones sino quizá pudiéramos, en su momento y bajo su dirección, establecer un grupo de contacto para hacer estas reuniones en forma temática, que nos permitieran tener presentaciones, por ejemplo, de los jefes de las oficinas que en nuestro sistema tienen que ver con los problemas: Comisión Interamericana para el Control del Abuso de Drogas (CICAD), Comité Interamericano contra el Terrorismo (CICTE), Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, AICD, etcétera. Quizá también pudiéramos beneficiarnos de presentaciones similares de parte de los países africanos.

Muchas gracias, señor Presidente, y nuevamente lo felicito por esta feliz iniciativa.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador, and I give the floor to the Ambassador of Egypt.

El OBSERVADOR PERMANENTE DE EGIPTO ANTE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States; Ambassador Olhaye, Dean of the African group; excellencies; ladies and gentlemen:

It gives me great personal pleasure to address you this morning for more than one reason.

First, as many have said, this is really our first meeting, and I truly believe, as the Chairman said, that it is a very good beginning to what will hopefully become a major achievement to the benefit of both the OAS and the African countries.

Second, I appreciate very much the fact that Egypt, in its own capacity, has been an observer to the OAS and has taken advantage of the facilities provided by the Organization. A few years ago, the Foreign Minister of Egypt came and spoke to the OAS, and cooperation has been exemplary on that point.

Third, the challenges faced by OAS member states and many African countries—for that matter by many members of the world community—are of a magnitude and importance that require more dialogue, cooperation, and understanding because they go to the root of our understanding. There are wonderful opportunities that we should not let pass by because of the pressures of day-to-day events and the crises that come here and there.

I know there are many speakers; therefore, I will try to keep my comments concise and will immediately go into the three agenda items that have been determined for this meeting.

First, I'd like to refer to the efforts by the African countries with regard to democracy and human rights. The African countries started dealing with this topic back in the early 1980s when they met under the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Nairobi, Kenya, and adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). If I am not mistaken, it was the Ambassador of Argentina who explained the uniqueness of this charter and how it encompasses a wide range of human rights and treats them on an equal basis. The Charter called on African countries to respect basic human rights, including the right to life, liberty, and security, and to ensure equal rights for men and women in all civil, social, and political domains. As a follow-up to the session in Nairobi, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACOHPR) was established in 1987, and since then human rights has been on the agenda of all African discussions.

One of the recent achievements in terms of building institutions to sustain the culture of democracy and human rights within Africa was the meeting held in 1998 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, at which we adopted the Protocol on the Establishment of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Furthermore, as part of the efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights through the protection of the basic right to life, the OAU adopted in 1999 the African Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism.

I would like now to refer to two areas of particular importance and priority from Egypt's perspective, from the African perspective and, from what I know of the OAS members, from many of your own perspectives. Those two areas are the defense of women's rights and the rights of children in particular, and they need to be given particular focus, debated widely, and dealt with in a proactive manner. I want to simply highlight our particular concern about the terrible and disturbing phenomenon of using children as soldiers in combat. This phenomenon not only affects present generations, but also many generations to come, and in our mind it completely contradicts the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted in 1999.

In discussing human rights issues and many of our other problems in Africa with a view to correcting these problems and benefiting our peoples, we have found that many of the conflicts, while they have historical bases, are a function of violations of human rights of one form or another. Therefore, this issue is among those being raised even in fora where conflict prevention, management, and resolution in Africa are discussed. We are proud in Egypt to host the Center for Conflict Resolution in Africa, and we intend to pursue that actively.

The second and third items on our agenda are development and trade and international cooperation for development. I think it's obvious to all of us that one of Africa's foremost challenges is that of economic and social development. For us, it holds the key to solving many of our problems, be they poverty, epidemics, peace, regional security, or cooperation.

For decades, we have exerted effort debating the reasons for Africa's economic plight. The dark memories of colonization were still fresh, and a sense of injustice was the defining sentiment for policy formulation. The main tool for development, it was thought, was aid from the outside world, particularly the former colonial powers. While I continue to believe that substantial aid should and must be provided to African countries if we are to resolve our economic development problems, aid in itself will never be sufficient to really deliver development objectives.

African nations today do not have the luxury of thinking about who is responsible for the past. What we focus on today is how to build the future. This new outlook is embodied in the current attitude towards the development of Africa in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This pan-African initiative, founded by Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa and adopted by the Summit of the OAU in June 2001, developed a policy framework and a program of action and follows up on implementation. NEPAD provides, through its different bodies, advice to the African Union (AU) on implementing this initiative.

The essence of NEPAD is that it takes back the responsibility for development and puts it squarely in the hands of African countries. It deals with Africa's development in a wide-ranging manner, encompassing economic, social, and political aspects by promoting better economic and political governance through collective standard-setting for Africa. In so doing, it focuses on education and health as a means to tap the potential of the continent's resources.

I don't want to miss this opportunity to underline that this initiative also calls on developing countries to match these efforts by providing sufficient development assistance. There is a tendency to look at issues as if trade can substitute aid. I want to underline that for us to succeed, both aid and increased trade are required, as well as proactivity by the recipients.

Colleagues, in Egypt as in all of Africa, we truly believe in self-sustaining sources of growth. Development assistance can only help in laying the foundation for growth. Investment, trade, and technology transfer are the tools for growth to be sustained. African countries will work hard on subregional free trade areas, which are planned to merge into a pan-African free trade area in the future. My country belongs to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), one of several subregional groupings. Already goods move freely within COMESA, with a few exceptions that have transitional periods, but regional trade alone will never carry the day. Like all developing countries, African nations need better trading opportunities with economies beyond their immediate reach. On the one hand, developed economies need to shift to a more transparent, fairer trade policy and to shape the global trading system in a way that is truly responsive to the requirements of development. I have in mind issues such as trade and textiles, agriculture, tropical products, as well as capacity building.

Furthermore, special and differential treatment provisions should be allowed to continue to facilitate the graduation of developing countries from taking advantage of those very provisions, first and foremost in matters critical to supporting health care and the fight against epidemics.

Developing developed countries trade and economic arrangements are an equally useful tool towards integrating developing economies into the global trading system and supporting reform programs domestically. Such exercises are developing across the Western Hemisphere, around the Mediterranean, throughout East Asia and the Pacific, as well as between African nations and both in the European Union (EU) and the USA. It is our belief that these projects, as they are being developed now, are building blocks for a stronger and hopefully more equitable global trading system, one that we can all depend upon.

Many of my colleagues who have spoken before me have focused on the areas in which we can work together and the tools that we can use in that regard. While I assume that it will ultimately fall to the OAU and the OAS to institutionalize these arrangements, we should not allow for a lapse between this present meeting and whatever formal mechanisms are established. I support many of the comments that encouraged informal contacts, working groups, consultations between interested members on specific topics, and the full utilization of the Chairman of the Permanent Council and the Dean of the African group. The African group meets monthly, and it's a good forum for exchanging views, understanding the concerns of OAS members, and transmitting our concerns back to you.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this initiative. It's a very good beginning, and I commit to you that we will work with you to build upon it.

Thank you, sir.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you very much, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Delegation of the United States.

El REPRESENTANTE ALTERNO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The U.S. Delegation is pleased at the initiative of the Chairman of the Permanent Council in bringing together the member states of the Organization of American States with their African

counterparts and thanks Assistant Secretary General Einaudi and Ambassador Olhaye for their presentations.

We recognize that this effort is consistent with and follows up on the Plan of Action of the Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies, which was held in Seoul, South Korea, from November 10 to 12, 2002. The Seoul Plan of Action specifically calls for “engaging regional and extra-regional partners to assist in democratic development and institution building.”

We welcome the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the objectives of which are consistent with those of the OAS in ensuring effectiveness, accountability, and measurable results. In this regard, we might consider exploring whether NEPAD and OAS members could cooperate in areas such as sharing best governance practices, peer review, technical assistance, and personnel exchanges and fellowships.

The United States again thanks the Chairman of the Permanent Council for this important and creative initiative to engage our African partners in our mutual effort to further develop democratic institutions in both our hemispheres.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Ghana.

El OBSERVADOR PERMANENTE DE GHANA ANTE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS: Excellency, Chair of the Permanent Council; Dean of the African diplomatic corps; excellencies, permanent representatives to the OAS; colleague excellencies from the African diplomatic corps:

I know that even though this is our first formal meeting, the voice of Africa has always been heard in this community through the representation of OAS members who have cultural ties to Africa and are of African descent. So in a sense, we have always been with you, but this will be a more institutionalized mechanism for us to advance our cooperation and collaboration.

The development experience of Africa and of the Americas points to one fundamental fact: you cannot sustain democracy and promote good governance unless you are able to achieve accelerated economic growth. If the people are poor, democracy means very little, so the two have to go hand in hand. It is therefore gratifying to note that many countries in the Americas have achieved sustained economic growth over the last decade, and Africa can learn from the experience of the Americas in this area.

First, I would like to identify a number of areas in which this sharing of experience could exist: the garment and textiles industry, agro-business, and information technology.

Second, I believe that we can benefit from the role that specialized agencies and organizations have played in supporting the work of this community. We can look specifically at the experience of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). As we continue to work towards developing the African Union

(AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the experience of these two agencies would be extremely helpful.

Third, we can also learn from the experience of the process of working towards a free trade agreement between the Americas, particularly as the United States has signaled that it is ready to negotiate a free trade agreement with the Southern African Customs Union (SACU).

In conclusion, I endorse the suggestion by the Representative of Mexico and those who spoke earlier that if we break into thematic groups, we would have a more meaningful and practical way of collaborating.

Thank you very much.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Algeria.

El OBSERVADOR PERMANENTE DE ARGELIA ANTE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Your Excellency Ambassador Denis Antoine, Permanent Representative of Grenada and Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States; our dear Dean of the African group, Ambassador Olhaye; excellencies:

This is a very interesting format for a meeting between our two regions. Here we are, meeting with your organization, which is a North-South organization between Latin American countries and industrialized countries—the United States and Canada on the one hand, in addition to the observers, of course, from other industrialized countries—and a group of purely southern countries from Africa.

It is true that Africa belongs to some North-South groupings, such as the Commonwealth and the Francophone Bloc. Some of us also belong to other groupings with the North, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the South Mediterranean countries, and the Community of Democracies.

I was looking at the possible concrete outcomes of this meeting and came up with three suggestions.

The first is that Algeria has been an observer to the OAS and has derived a lot of benefits from our participation in meetings of the Organization. But I note that a relatively small number of African countries are observers to the OAS, and this might be an opportunity for the African countries accredited to the United States that are not permanent observers to the OAS to consider joining.

The second suggestion refers to the kinds of interaction that we can have between the group of African ambassadors and the OAS membership. The priority issues for the OAS that were mentioned in the document that was distributed to us are the same issues that are of interest to our region. So I see some possibilities, as suggested by the distinguished Representative of Mexico, for thematic contact groups to look at some of these priority issues.

In this respect, a few days ago the African countries ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, also known as the Algiers Convention. That convention was signed in 1999 and has been ratified since that time. This is a field in which Africa has a very effective instrument, and I don't know whether there is something equivalent in Latin America.

I was thinking also of institutional cooperation between the OAS and the African Union (AU). It's a pity that a representative of the AU isn't present with us today, but I would suggest that as a follow-up to this meeting, we look at how the AU representative in New York might establish contact with the OAS Secretariat and suggest some issues of convergence that could be discussed in a thematic group.

We need to make the most of the elements of convergence that we have, not only in the economic field. My colleagues have talked about the importance of combating poverty, the promotion of human rights, the rights of women, and the rights of children. I note in this context that the only two countries that have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child are found in our two regions. You have the United States in the OAS, and we have Somalia in Africa. We want to do our best to get both countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child as soon as possible.

There are some other issues of common concern, such as HIV/AIDS, which is a priority for us and which has been addressed in your region with a lot of success. Perhaps a steering group headed by our dean and by the Chairman of the Permanent Council of the OAS could try to identify some specific priority issues that could be addressed in this context.

But I have a third proposal. Would it be possible to go beyond the North-South character of the OAS and the purely southern character of the African group to establish a South-South linkage between the ambassadors of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) and the African ambassadors? Such an informal group could review together issues of concern and so learn from one another. I'm thinking of economic reform, an area in which there's a lot of interaction and a lot that we could do together.

We could also exchange views and cooperate in the area of energy. You have the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE); we have the African Energy Commission (AFREC), which has just come into force. These are two regional southern organizations concerned with energy, and it would be nice to promote interaction between them. Algeria is now an observer member of OLADE. This is an interesting example of cross-participation that we may wish to encourage in order to promote better interaction between GRULAC countries and Africa with regard to experience and technical assistance in the area of energy.

A third suggestion would be the promotion of South-South cooperation and investment. We could at least investigate the possibility of promoting direct trade exchanges and investments between Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.

It would also be interesting to exchange views on free trade areas. What are the lessons? What are the pitfalls? Can we use free trade areas as an element to promote greater prosperity for our regions?

These are some of the proposals that I would like to submit to your attention in the spirit of practicality and concreteness.

Thank you very much.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you, Ambassador. Yours was a very rich medley of issues and very pertinent ideas. Just as a point of information, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States adopted the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism at its thirty-second regular session, held this last June in Barbados. In addition, there has been a relationship with the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU). We are now determining whether that would be honored by its successor, the African Union (AU); therefore, your sentiments in that regard are also on the mind of the General Secretariat. So I appreciate your intervention.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Tunisia.

El OBSERVADOR PERMANENTE DE TÚNEZ ANTE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dear colleagues; ladies and gentlemen:

I first of all wish to thank you for this opportunity and commend you and my colleagues for bringing this initiative to fruition. In fact, we are gathered in this Hall of the Americas, as I understand it, driven by a common desire, which is to try to foster greater understanding between our two regions and continents and among their member states.

No continent or region, let alone individual countries, is immune to difficulties and challenges. Each one of us faces our own lot. Some of us face small challenges, some of us great challenges, but to the nations concerned, all of these challenges are important. Each of us faces the task of standing up to the issues and getting the best possible results for the benefit of our nations and our regions.

Of course, with the interrelations that we see more and more today between countries and between regions, the task can be easier or harder. If we face the challenge in a cooperative way, we can win and move faster. Globalization, which one of the previous speakers mentioned, can and should be a positive tool in economic development to close the gap between rich and poor countries or between developed and developing countries. It should not become the reason for this gap.

African countries are equally committed to democracy, human rights, and the opening of opportunities to allow greater participation of people and the private sector in economic activities. The reality that each one of us faces probably puts us in different situations. This is especially true when it comes to economic empowerment. Countries and regions do not enjoy similar situations to begin with and are not equally endowed with natural resources; therefore, some of them would require greater assistance and more generous cooperation from the advanced world.

Investment in education and social development are equally critical in creating the fundamental structures that can ensure sustained and far-reaching development, but the effort must be sustained over the long haul, based on a commitment to see it through.

We must also be fully aware of the social conditions that differ from one country to another. The colonial legacy was mentioned earlier, but difficulties that some countries encountered in the early years of their independence have also left us in Africa with another social problem, poverty. Countries in Africa are conducting a great effort to eradicate this scourge. Tunisia presented a proposal to the United Nations two years ago for the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund, especially geared to fight poverty around the world. Hopefully, the Fund will be officially established this year after the Secretary-General of the United Nations has finished all discussions with member states. This initiative should be seen for its intended global reach, not limitation to Africa only.

Access to a decent life and to other basic fundamentals of living, such as health, education, and employment is part of the global definition of human rights, as much as those fundamentals represent a prerequisite to economic empowerment and the creation of a responsible social group fully engaged in the political life of its country.

Political freedoms and democratic participation are also a unifying component in our approach to development shared not only by the two regions that we represent, but also throughout the world. Democracy is a process that countries have embarked upon with determination, but also with expectations. Of course, we look at the experience of countries in the Americas in order to learn from it and maybe use some of it in our own demarche.

I do believe that today's meeting is an opportunity to look at what we can do together and what we can share to support one another in our common quest, as expressed in the three themes of this meeting. As the speakers who preceded me have underlined, institutions and legal frameworks to foster, promote, and protect human rights and democratic exercises have been established in Africa and in the Americas. We must ensure that they accomplish the tasks for which they were created and help create a better environment for greater participation by future generations.

Mr. Chairman, in Tunisia we believe that emancipation of women and equal rights with their male counterparts, as well as education for all, are an integral part of human rights. They serve as a driving force to ensure continuity. The highly progressive situation we have attained in Tunisia on both counts is a clear indication of the validity of this orientation. Indeed, once the two pillars are solidly in place, development and social empowerment, be it economic, political, or otherwise, can only follow as it imposes itself through the channel of knowledge.

I join my colleagues in welcoming future interactions between our two groups. We hope that we will have an opportunity to share ideas and opinions about issues of mutual concern. The creation of small groups to discuss various subjects could be an effective way to propel this initiative toward more practical levels of cooperation.

I thank you very much, and I appreciate the time.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Peru.

El REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DEL PERÚ: Gracias, señor Presidente. Deseo expresar, en primer lugar, mi agradecimiento a usted por haber tomado la iniciativa de convocar –

debo obviar que fue aprobado por el Consejo— a esta sesión extraordinaria con observadores permanentes africanos ante la Organización de los Estados Americanos y países del África acreditados ante el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos. También le agradezco al Secretario General Adjunto por la presentación que ha hecho al iniciar la sesión y, por supuesto, al distinguido Embajador de Djibouti por sus importantes reflexiones.

Yo creo, señor Presidente, que no hay duda de que todos debemos estar satisfechos por el diálogo que estamos realizando en esta sesión extraordinaria del Consejo Permanente. Y no hay duda porque es obvio, de lo que ya hemos escuchado, que compartimos intereses, valores y problemas comunes los países del África y los países de América Latina y del Caribe. Así como existe coordinación al nivel de las Naciones Unidas y en otros foros internacionales, es muy oportuno que iniciemos un diálogo entre nuestros países sobre este conjunto de temas e intereses compartidos.

La lista es muy larga. Se ha mencionado una serie de temas en que realmente existe la oportunidad de intercambiar y compartir experiencias, y también, por supuesto, en donde es posible promover la cooperación. La promoción de la democracia y la defensa de los derechos humanos son aspectos fundamentales en ambas regiones y hoy día, en general, en el mundo entero. Igualmente, los temas de comercio e inversión son prioritarios hoy día para las economías de las dos regiones.

Tenemos que trabajar juntos e intercambiar ideas sobre la forma de presentarnos y obtener una adecuada cooperación para el desarrollo. Tenemos el gran problema común de enfrentar la lucha contra la pobreza. Y estos temas están vinculados. Yo deseo en esta oportunidad recordar muy brevemente el artículo pertinente de la Carta Democrática Interamericana, el artículo 11, que nos dice: “La democracia y el desarrollo económico y social son interdependientes y se refuerzan mutuamente”; y el artículo 12, que dice: “La pobreza, el analfabetismo y los bajos niveles de desarrollo humano son factores que inciden negativamente en la consolidación de la democracia...”

Hay que darle, pues, rostro humano a la democracia. En ese reto estamos también juntos los países del África y los países de América Latina y el Caribe.

Hay otros temas igualmente importantes. Yo creo que la defensa del medio ambiente y la vinculación del medio ambiente con el desarrollo es una preocupación igualmente compartida por los países de las dos regiones que hoy día estamos dialogando; y también la manera de enfrentar juntos o compartir experiencias para cooperar en la lucha contra el narcotráfico y la lucha contra el terrorismo. En los campos técnicos se ha mencionado, por ejemplo, el caso de la energía; allí también hay muchas experiencias por compartir.

Y, por supuesto, como consecuencia de todo esto yo creo que es muy interesante lo que han dicho los distinguidos Embajadores del África, de iniciar o poner elementos adicionales para la cooperación Sur-Sur. Este concepto antiguo es un concepto también relevante, nuevo, actual y futuro. La cooperación Sur-Sur es un aspecto fundamental sobre el cual debemos profundizar.

Yo creo, señor Presidente, que esta primera iniciativa debe tener continuidad. Esta exitosa iniciativa debe ser la primera para llegar a establecer algún mecanismo que nos permita continuar dialogando, de manera un poco más ordenada y concreta. Quizás para una próxima reunión podamos establecer unos temas sobre los cuales podemos profundizar. Para llegar a tener un diálogo más institucionalizado, tal como ha sido dicho ya por un colega mío, el distinguido Embajador de México,

esta primera reunión era necesaria y creo yo que ha sido muy exitosa. Por eso nuevamente extendiendo un saludo cordial a nuestros amigos del África, y a usted, señor Presidente, nuevamente mi felicitación por esta feliz iniciativa.

Muchas gracias.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Delegation of Canada.

La REPRESENTANTE ALTERNA DEL CANADÁ: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canada supports substantive dialogue at the level of the Permanent Council and active participation of permanent observers, so we thank and congratulate you for organizing this special meeting.

His Excellency Roble Olhaye mentioned the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada. It is Canada's intention to pursue the implementation of the agenda discussed in Kananaskis, and in that regard, I'm happy to report that Canada has called for an end to export subsidies, the opening of the industrial world's markets to the globe's poorest nations, and the overriding of patent laws to provide those nations with access to needed medicines. These are limited steps, but we believe that they are steps in the right direction, and we would like to encourage all the member states to join us in that direction.

Also, the Canadian House of Commons yesterday approved the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We believe this is another step in the right direction.

Several distinguished representatives have called for more dialogue between Latin American and African countries and opportunities to institutionalize such dialogue. Despite our French roots, we will not pretend that we are part of Latin America, but we certainly do look forward to participating in such a dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

El PRESIDENTE: Thank you, Representative of Canada, and I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Kingdom of Morocco.

El OBSERVADOR PERMANENTE DEL REINO DE MARRUECOS ANTE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak with you all.

I have an observation. Our understanding when we received the invitation to take part in this special meeting was that the African group of ambassadors and representatives to the United States would be meeting with their counterparts in the OAS. We are attending the meeting on that basis.

However, many ambassadors have suggested that cooperation should be extended to the African Union (AU). I would like to make a reservation on that suggestion because, as everybody knows, Morocco is no longer a member of the African Union. We support all of the suggestions by

our colleagues in order to strengthen cooperation between the OAS and the African group, specifically between the African embassies in the United States and the OAS, not between the OAS and the African Union.

Thank you very much.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Saint Lucia.

La REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE SANTA LUCÍA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, let me commend you for your initiative in getting this special meeting off the ground. I also wish to add my voice to that of the Assistant Secretary General and others who have spoken before me in welcoming the Dean of the African ambassadors and other members of the African diplomatic corps to the Organization of American States. Saint Lucia, as part of the African diaspora, believes that this visit to the OAS is long overdue. Of course, we are extremely pleased that we are now able to implement a recommendation that has been discussed in many quarters.

Mr. Chair, the need for engagement with Africa is undeniable. Our goals are the same and the measures to be taken to achieve these goals are the same; namely, they are solidly based on the formation of partnerships. We think that the OAS and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now called the African Union (AU) and to which most, if not all, African states are party, have similar purposes and principles.

For example, the African Union strives to promote the unity and solidarity of all African states to coordinate and intensify their cooperation efforts in order to achieve a better life for the people of Africa. So does the OAS.

The member states of the AU work together to defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, as well as to promote cooperation, giving due regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Similar action is taken and considered by the OAS.

Mr. Chair, all in all, we have to admit that the philosophies behind the creation of the OAS and the AU are similar. These philosophies entail good governance, peace and stability, economic development, democracy, and respect for human rights. Of course, the obstacles that are encountered in maintaining these philosophies in this hemisphere are not vastly different from those encountered in Africa. So, Mr. Chair, there is a significant amount of cross-over and commonality in the activities of this hemispheric organ, the OAS, and the organ of the African continent, the AU.

Mr. Chair, Saint Lucia believes that it can learn through the sharing of experiences. A number of representatives have mentioned that point as well. We can learn from the members of the African continent about the problems they have experienced in a number of areas that have already been identified by some of the representatives here.

But let me single out an activity that I think is highly commendable: the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which to many seems to be the first development program for

Africa devised by Africans. The goal of that program of strengthening the fledgling democracies of Africa and the principles of governance in order to attract foreign investment and, at the same time, implement a plan for poverty eradication is one that Caribbean countries have been pursuing for some time in this organization. So herein lies a commonality, an area in which we can learn from the experiences of the African countries.

For those who are not very knowledgeable about the African economy, let me very briefly note that economic growth on the African continent, which was more than four percent in 2001, was faster than that of any other region in the developing world. According to a report by the United Nations released in September, only 16 African countries experienced gross domestic product (GDP) growth of less than three percent in 2001, compared to 27 countries in 2000. Therefore, we can learn from the experiences of our African brothers and sisters on the issue of economic growth.

Mr. Chair, let me also endorse the remarks of those who have indicated that we need to institutionalize future meetings with our African counterparts. I think it is imperative, as proposed by the Ambassador of Algeria and others, that a technical group from the OAS and the African group of ambassadors get together to identify areas of cooperation and partnership. We would be bringing together at a critical time those who maintain that economic development must precede political development and that basic human rights must be an integral part of any development plan.

I thank you.

EL PRESIDENTE: I thank you, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Venezuela.

EL REPRESENTANTE PERMANENTE DE VENEZUELA: Distinguido Presidente del Consejo Permanente de la OEA, Embajador Denis Antoine, agradecemos en nombre de nuestra Delegación la gentileza que ha tenido de presidir esta reunión entre representantes de países de las Américas y representantes embajadores de países de África; distinguido Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Luigi Einaudi; distinguido Embajador Roble Olhaye, quien representa a sus colegas en este foro:

Permítaseme salirme un poco de la formalidad diplomática, que obliga a hablar en plural, porque siento la necesidad de hacerlo en singular. Quisiera recordar un episodio que guardo en mi memoria, cuando con ocasión de la Segunda Cumbre de Jefes de Estado soberanos y de gobiernos de la Organización de Países Exportadores de Petróleo (OPEP), que iba a celebrarse en Caracas en el año 2000, me correspondió visitar países de esta organización petrolera, entre ellos Argelia y Nigeria.

En Nigeria –y he aquí la digresión de carácter singular– en el momento en que firmábamos un convenio bilateral entre mi país, Venezuela, y ese hermoso y digno país del África, uno de los más poblados, por cierto, de ese pujante continente, me tocó iniciar mi discurso con las palabras que voy a repetir ahora. Dije entonces ante la audiencia: “Les habla un africano, les habla un hombre de África”. Comprenderán ustedes que la sorpresa fue particular porque, aparentemente, el rostro de quien les habla no se asemeja exactamente a la tipología. Pero, efectivamente, la expresión era el reflejo de un sentimiento, del cual hice eco, del pueblo de Venezuela. Porque quiero que ustedes sepan que los venezolanos, y tal vez la mayoría de los países caribeños, somos países africanos en el sentido de que nuestra nacionalidad, la conformación societaria de nuestros países, es el fruto de un

prodigioso mestizaje cultural –sincretismo cultural– que ha dado lugar a lo que hoy somos como nación. Por esa razón nos sentimos orgullosos de ser africanos y reivindicamos profundamente, con la dignidad que corresponde, nuestras raíces africanas, porque ellas están presentes en nuestro modo de ser, en nuestra cultura, en nuestra religión, en nuestro modo de existir como sociedad de este tiempo.

No puedo hacer otra cosa que adherir las consideraciones de los colegas que se han pronunciado en esta mañana y en esta tarde, en el sentido de que, siendo nosotros americanos que tanto debemos a esas raíces africanas, no podríamos hacer otra cosa que procurar encontrar nuevos caminos para el entendimiento, para la integración y la cooperación entre nuestros continentes.

He aquí que me permito respaldar, en nombre de la Delegación de Venezuela, la iniciativa que ha subrayado la Embajadora de Santa Lucía, en el sentido de que pudiera ser bastante útil y productivo que al final de esta sesión aprobáramos la posibilidad de crear un grupo de carácter técnico bi-continental, que pudiera ocuparse de identificar de manera precisa áreas de cooperación.

Como quiera que las áreas de cooperación, sin duda alguna, son muchas, como iniciativa simplemente, en nombre de Venezuela, les diré que podremos perfectamente explorar dos opciones: la opción de la cooperación energética, a cuyos efectos Venezuela viene brindando apoyo a los países hermanos del Caribe que tienen, como nosotros, raíces profundamente africanas; y también nos gustaría que se considerara la cooperación en el ámbito de la cultura, porque ciertamente es allí, en el ámbito de la literatura, del arte, de la producción intelectual, en donde nosotros podemos, en tanto que expresión de una sinfonía intelectual que nos viene de nuestros ancestros, encontrar posibilidades para solidificar aun más los lazos de amistad, e incluso de agradecimiento, que sentimos por los pueblos del África a quienes tanto debemos, porque les debemos lo que somos hoy los latinoamericanos, y en particular los venezolanos.

Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank you very much, Ambassador, and I now give the floor to the Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines . . . I'm sorry, of Saint Kitts and Nevis—at least one of the Saints. [Risas.]

La REPRESENTANTE ALTERNA DE SAINT KITTS Y NEVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Allow me first to thank you, as others have done, for convening this very special meeting with the representatives of the African nations. We also welcome our very special guests to this, the Hall of the Americas.

For the Delegation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, this meeting is significant in that it attempts to bridge a gap between nations and continents, among people who share common goals and aspirations, and among people who are resilient and strong in the face of internal and external threats. Here, let me concur with the Ambassador of Ghana in that Africa has always been represented here in the OAS. The Ambassador of Venezuela echoed that statement a moment ago.

Mr. Chairman, experience has taught us that we are not immune to the negative elements that characterize today's global environment. Here, I refer specifically to HIV/AIDS. We are aware of the great strides being made by the countries of the African continent in their attempt to confront this scourge, and we believe that this topic should be included for discussion in the follow-up meeting or whatever mechanism we adopt here today. In that way, we can share experiences and adopt best practices so that we can learn from each other. We believe that we cannot divorce matters of health from poverty or social development, and social and economic development is severely undermined when scarce resources are diverted to treat those who are ill or to house and feed those who are orphaned.

Similarly, we have all agreed that democracy cannot be separated from poverty and, equally important, the common thread of respect and promotion of human rights is essential. We have much to learn and much on which to build. I therefore look forward to a follow-up meeting, and we thank you especially, Mr. Chairman, for this meeting.

Thank you.

El PRESIDENTE: I thank the distinguished Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis for her very important intervention.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I wish to thank the Dean of the African diplomatic corps and our guests, particularly the permanent observers to the OAS from the African countries and the ambassadors of the African countries to the United States.

This morning we have opened new vistas to areas of possible exchanges among nations. It is true that there are few observers from Africa here at the Permanent Council; however, slow though the process may be, Nigeria has made an application for permanent observer status, and that application is being processed at this time.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Permanent Council and my colleagues, to congratulate two countries on the commemoration of their independence days. Burkina Faso celebrates its independence today, December 11, and Kenya will celebrate its independence on December 12.

It is important that I ask the Dean whether he wishes to make closing remarks. I give the floor to His Excellency Roble Olhaye.

El EMBAJADOR EXTRAORDINARIO Y PLENIPOTENCIARIO DE LA REPÚBLICA DE DJIBOUTI ANTE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, a clarification for my colleague, the Ambassador of Algeria. He mentioned earlier that only two countries, the United States and Somalia, have not signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would like to let him know that Somalia has ratified the Convention, so he can maintain his statistics on the one that hasn't ratified. [Risas.]

Mr. Chairman, overall, this has been an extremely useful and successful experiment. The initiative deserves congratulations, and we welcome the emerging support for more formal and regular contacts. We applaud this outcome, which we didn't expect when we were coming to this Hall, but it is laudable and we are all happy about it. It must be sustained, and we look forward to further contact.

So on behalf of my colleagues who, I must say, have come out in impressive numbers this morning, I express gratitude to you all, who have also come in large numbers this morning, for inviting and hosting us in this historic hall and for the wonderful, frank, and constructive exchanges that have emerged this morning. I also express our profound and sincere thanks to my friend, the Chairman of the Permanent Council. I thank you all.

El PRESIDENTE: Ladies and gentlemen, this meeting is adjourned.

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