

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA  
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA  
CELEBRADA  
EL 19 DE JULIO DE 2005

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## CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

### ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 19 DE JULIO DE 2005

En la ciudad de Washington, a las tres y quince de la tarde del martes 19 de julio de 2005, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos con motivo de la toma de posesión del Secretario General Adjunto. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Roberto Álvarez, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajadora Deborah-Mae Lovell, Representante Permanente de Antigua y Barbuda y Vicepresidenta del Consejo Permanente  
Embajador Denis G. Antoine, Representante Permanente de Grenada  
Embajadora Sonia Merlyn Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía  
Embajador Joshua Sears, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de las Bahamas  
Embajador Esteban Tomic, Representante Permanente de Chile  
Embajador Juan Enrique Fischer, Representante Permanente del Uruguay  
Embajadora Lisa Shoman, Representante Permanente de Belice  
Embajador Michael I. King, Representante Permanente de Barbados  
Embajador Izben C. Williams, Representante Permanente de Saint Kitts y Nevis  
Embajador Paul D. Durand, Representante Permanente del Canadá  
Embajador Henry Lothar Illes, Representante Permanente de Suriname  
Embajador Rodolfo Hugo Gil, Representante Permanente de la Argentina  
Embajadora Marina Valère, Representante Permanente de Trinidad y Tobago  
Embajadora Carmen Marina Gutiérrez Salazar, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua  
Embajadora María Tamayo Arnal, Representante Permanente de Bolivia  
Embajador John F. Maisto, Representante Permanente de los Estados Unidos  
Embajador Bayney R. Karran, Representante Permanente de Guyana  
Embajador Francisco Villagrán de León, Representante Permanente de Guatemala  
Embajador Jorge Eduardo Chen Charpentier, Representante Permanente de México  
Embajador Gordon V. Shirley, Representante Permanente de Jamaica  
Embajador Aristides Royo, Representante Permanente de Panamá  
Embajador Duly Brutus, Representante Permanente de Haití  
Embajador Manuel María Cáceres Cardozo, Representante Permanente del Paraguay  
Embajador Javier Sancho Bonilla, Representante Permanente de Costa Rica  
Embajador Álvaro Tirado Mejía, Representante Permanente de Colombia  
Embajador Osmar Chohfi, Representante Permanente del Brasil  
Embajador Mario Alemán, Representante Permanente del Ecuador  
Embajador Mauricio Aguilar Robles, Representante Interino de Honduras  
Embajador Carlos Zapata López, Representante Interino del Perú  
Ministra Consejera Mayerlyn Cordero Díaz, Representante Alternativa de la República Dominicana  
Embajador Nelson Pineda Prada, Representante Alternativo de Venezuela  
Tercera Secretaria Judith Anne Rolle, Representante Alternativa del Commonwealth de Dominica  
Ministro Consejero Flavio José Villacorta, Representante Alternativo de El Salvador

También estuvieron presentes el Secretario General de la Organización, doctor José Miguel Insulza, y el Secretario General Adjunto, Embajador Albert R. Ramdin, Secretario del Consejo Permanente.

El PRESIDENTE: Señores Representantes, señor Secretario General, hemos sido convocados para investir al Embajador Albert Ramdin en el cargo de Secretario General Adjunto de nuestra Organización, dando así un nuevo paso en la evolución de la historia institucional de nuestra Organización.

#### PALABRAS DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL

El PRESIDENTE: Tiene la palabra el Secretario General, don José Miguel Insulza.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL: Señor Presidente del Consejo Permanente, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana ante la OEA; señor Embajador Albert Ramdin, Secretario General Adjunto de la Organización de los Estados Americanos; señores Representantes Permanentes; señores Representantes Alternos; señores Observadores; miembros de organismos interamericanos; miembros del Congreso de los Estados Unidos; distinguidos invitados; señoras y señores:

Cuando hace unas pocas semanas en la Asamblea General de Fort Lauderdale Albert Ramdin fue elegido Secretario General Adjunto de la OEA, en su discurso de aceptación señaló que, para cumplir plenamente con su misión hemisférica, la Organización debe comprometerse firmemente a ayudar a los Estados con los objetivos críticos del desarrollo: el mantenimiento de la democracia, la gobernabilidad, los derechos humanos; la promoción de la justicia social, la igualdad, las economías sustentables y la reducción de la pobreza.

Sus palabras, ciertamente, fueron importantes porque él no es un hombre de muchas palabras, sino que más bien las mide con cuidado. Es un hombre sereno, imperturbable e infinitamente paciente que conoce las ventajas y los méritos de un trabajo lento, tranquilo, perseverante y silencioso. Así ha sido a lo largo de su vida, como estudiante, como académico, como diplomático de carrera, cada paso que ha dado ha sido un peldaño más que lo ha llevado a la Secretaría General Adjunta de la OEA.

Albert Ramdin se educó en Paramaribo, Suriname, y en la Universidad de Ámsterdam y en la Universidad Libre (Ámsterdam), en los Países Bajos. Se especializó en problemas económicos y sociales de las economías más pequeñas de América Latina y el Caribe.

Fue Representante Permanente de Suriname ante la OEA. Actuó como líder del Consejo Permanente y del Consejo Interamericano para el Desarrollo Integral de la Organización. Fue asesor del ex Secretario General César Gaviria en cuestiones del Caribe y Secretario General Adjunto de Relaciones Exteriores y Comunitarias de la Comunidad del Caribe (CARICOM). Trabajó activamente en la solución de crisis y en los programas de desarrollo, especialmente se recuerda su acción en la búsqueda de una salida política y pacífica a la crisis de Haití.

La OEA concluyó que para Secretario General Adjunto requería una persona que tuviera una perspectiva clara acerca de lo que somos como cuerpo y como región, que conociera bien la maquinaria burocrática y técnica de la OEA, sus debilidades y sus fortalezas, tanto en la arena política como administrativa, que conociera también el imperativo ético de actuar con prontitud y responsabilidad ante una emergencia política o un desastre natural, que tuviera conciencia del peso de una decisión que puede afectar a miles de personas para aliviar sufrimientos y construir desarrollo,

justicia y paz, que tuviera años de experiencia a sus espaldas para sortear con destreza las minuciosidades técnicas y reconocer con agilidad lo sustantivo, lo crucial.

Esa persona es Albert Ramdin, una figura sencilla a quien he aprendido a conocer muy de cerca en los últimos meses, en los meses previos y posteriores a mi elección como Secretario General, que no se asusta ante las decisiones difíciles ni rehúye los conflictos.

Creo que se ha preparado mucho para este trabajo y ha caminado por la ruta del político, del diplomático y del servidor público regional. Trae aquí la fuerza de su tierra, que tiene un destino continental en América del Sur y, al mismo tiempo, tiene un compromiso caribeño. Es, por lo tanto, un buen constructor de puentes confiables y sólidos entre la Comunidad del Caribe, que lo apoyó de manera irrestricta, y los países de América Latina.

Embajador Ramdin, celebro la oportunidad de trabajar juntos en esta apasionante aventura que tenemos por delante. Estoy seguro de que vamos a trabajar en equipo con eficiencia, lealtad y entusiasmo. Saludo a usted, a su esposa, a sus cuatro hijas, a su familia, y les deseo el mayor de los éxitos en esta tarea y este cambio que emprenden en sus vidas en los próximos años. Todos nosotros tenemos en común la tarea de construir una América unida, más próspera, más pacífica, más justa y mejor.

Muchas gracias. [Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Muchas gracias, señor Secretario General.

#### PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: El Embajador Ramdin fue elegido, como ustedes saben, Secretario General Adjunto de la Organización de los Estados Americanos el 7 de junio de 2005, durante el trigésimo quinto período ordinario de sesiones de la Asamblea General de la OEA.

El Embajador Ramdin ha tenido una extensa y distinguida carrera de servicio público a nivel regional, hemisférico e internacional. Ocupó el cargo de Asesor Principal del Ministro de Comercio e Industria de Suriname, donde trabajó intensamente en la puesta en práctica del Programa de Ajuste Estructural de su país, el programa de desarrollo industrial y la reestructuración de ese Ministerio. En esta función, presidió y fue miembro de varias comisiones de desarrollo de política nacional, incluyendo la comisión para el Establecimiento del Fondo de Inversiones y la de Privatización de Empresas Estatales. En 1995 el Embajador Ramdin se incorporó al sector privado como Director de Mercadeo de una empresa internacional. Dos años más tarde regresó al servicio público cuando fue designado Asesor del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y del Ministro de Hacienda de Suriname.

En 1997 Albert Ramdin fue designado Embajador Extraordinario y Plenipotenciario y Representante Permanente de Suriname ante la OEA, donde, como dijo el Secretario General, presidió el Consejo Permanente de la OEA en el período de enero a marzo del año 1998 y la Comisión Permanente del Consejo Interamericano para el Desarrollo Integral en 1999. También coordinó el Comité de Embajadores de la CARICOM de enero a julio de 1998, cuando Suriname ocupó la Presidencia de la CARICOM.

El Embajador Ramdin fue co-Presidente del Comité Técnico de Alto Nivel del proceso CARICOM-Centroamérica, proceso que condujo a los preparativos de la Cuarta Reunión de Cancilleres de la CARICOM y de Centroamérica en marzo de 1999. También representó a su país en las reuniones preparatorias de la Segunda Cumbre de las Américas y en las negociaciones del Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas (ALCA).

En 1999 el Embajador Ramdin fue designado Secretario General Adjunto de Relaciones Exteriores y Comunitarias de la CARICOM, responsabilizándose de la coordinación de la política exterior de ese foro y el fortalecimiento de las relaciones entre sus Estados Miembros.

Mientras ocupaba ese cargo, representó a la CARICOM en conferencias internacionales, hemisféricas y regionales, en las cuales abogó por la necesidad de una política exterior proactiva y estratégica para la CARICOM. Firme partidario de crear alianzas con otros movimientos de integración regional y agrupaciones económicas en el Hemisferio, el Embajador Ramdin desempeñó un papel protagónico en el fortalecimiento de las relaciones con el Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana y la Comunidad Andina, contribuyendo a una mayor cooperación entre la CARICOM y estas organizaciones. Asimismo, procuró revitalizar las relaciones con terceros países con el propósito de lograr una mayor eficacia y eficiencia en los arreglos de cooperación.

En 2001 el Secretario General de la OEA lo designó Asesor principal para el Caribe, cargo desde el cual siguió de cerca la situación en Haití, el tema de los desafíos de los pequeños Estados y monitoreó la agenda de negociaciones comerciales del Hemisferio. Asimismo, trabajó con ahínco para asegurar que el Secretario General y las unidades de la OEA estuvieran bien informados sobre las preocupaciones e intereses de la región del Caribe.

Antes de su elección como Secretario General Adjunto, ocupó el cargo de Embajador itinerante y Asesor Especial para el Hemisferio Occidental del Gobierno de la República de Suriname.

El Embajador Albert Ramdin se educó en Paramaribo, Suriname, en la Universidad de Ámsterdam y en la Universidad Libre (Ámsterdam), donde estudió Geografía de los Países en Desarrollo con una especialización en los problemas sociales y económicos de las economías más pequeñas de América Latina y el Caribe. El Embajador Ramdin es miembro del Directorio del Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales de la Universidad de Suriname.

Cabe destacar que, en su discurso ante la Asamblea General, el Embajador Ramdin expresó la necesidad de trabajar arduamente, junto con todos los Estados Miembros, en mantener la democracia y el buen gobierno, defender los derechos humanos, promover la justicia social, la igualdad y la reducción de la pobreza, todos temas de la mayor importancia en nuestra agenda hemisférica y a los cuales, estamos seguros, se dedicará con especial atención.

Asimismo, estamos seguros de que trabajará en estrecha coordinación con el Secretario General en todos estos temas y en aquellos que nuestra ocupada agenda hemisférica les demande, así como también para lograr una Organización más eficiente y que sea realmente relevante para los ciudadanos de las Américas.

Embajador Ramdin, sabemos que la OEA tiene grandes retos frente a sí y confiamos en que usted será una persona que dedicará su mejor esfuerzo para sobreponerlos.

CEREMONIA DE INVESTIDURA  
DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO

El PRESIDENTE: Señor Embajador Albert Ramdin, como Presidente del Consejo Permanente y en representación de todos nuestros países, lo invisto del cargo de Secretario General Adjunto de la Organización de los Estados Americanos. Muchas felicidades. [Aplausos.]

PALABRAS DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO

El PRESIDENTE: Tiene la palabra el Embajador Ramdin, Secretario General Adjunto.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO: Mr. Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Roberto Álvarez; Secretary General, don José Miguel Insulza; permanent and alternate representatives; permanent observers; representatives of international and regional organizations; OAS staff members; specially invited guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me begin today by congratulating Ambassador Roberto Álvarez of the Dominican Republic on his recent assumption of the office of Chair of the Permanent Council. Ambassador, in your maiden speech a couple of days ago, you set the tone for an interesting agenda that will be very challenging to this organization, and I look forward to working with you and your Caribbean colleagues who will chair the Council for the next several months.

At the outset, I offer my sympathy and condolences to the governments and peoples of our sister countries in the Caribbean, Mexico, and the United States that were affected by the chain of recent hurricanes. The Organization of American States will continue to work with you and do everything possible to assist in your return to normalcy.

Distinguished representatives, I am humbled by your confidence and honored by the opportunity to serve the member states by fulfilling the important tasks of the office of Assistant Secretary General. I do not take lightly the significance of the office of Assistant Secretary General. It is, indeed, a huge responsibility and an honorable duty.

We have come a long way in achieving our objectives in the OAS, but many challenges still confront us. Despite the pervasive financial constraints within which the Organization is forced to operate, I offer member states my steadfast commitment to work towards the implementation of mandates. Therefore, in upholding the principles of the Charter, I promise to enhance the *raison d'être* of the OAS by promoting greater efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness. Through a process of constructive consultation and modernization, we intend to improve our delivery capacity, as well as the political functions of the Organization.

Allow me to express some sentiments of thanks.

First, I want to express my warmest gratitude and special appreciation to my dear wife, Charmaine, and our daughters, Kathryn, Kristyn, Amy, and Anu, for their love, patience, and support.

Allow me to reiterate my gratitude to the Government of Suriname, especially the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for their faith in my vision for the OAS. I also extend heartfelt

thanks to the governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) for their endorsement and to other member states for their firm support at this very important moment in the history of the Organization and our hemisphere. As Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, I pledge to do the work entrusted to me to the best of my ability and to serve each member state.

I thank my distinguished predecessors present today, Ambassador Luigi Einaudi and Ambassador Christopher Thomas, for their stewardship and noble work on behalf of the peoples of the Hemisphere.

I thank our new Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, for his support. I am particularly encouraged and impressed by your commitment to collegiality and teamwork. You can count on my full support and that of my team as we tackle the important hemispheric agenda.

I also thank and salute the many friends whom I see here today. I am delighted that you could attend, and I thank you for your support and encouragement. Finally, a special word of thanks to Ambassador Denis Antoine, the dean of the OAS diplomatic corps, for his guidance and support over the past months.

I want to reassure my colleagues in the OAS, whose unrelenting efforts and hard work contribute to many of this organization's successes, that I value your service. Your work demonstrates how seriously you take your responsibilities to this organization. I therefore say to you that as Assistant Secretary General, I will work to see that the Organization takes equally seriously its responsibility to you. I look forward to working with you, hearing from you, and benefiting from your experience and expertise.

I also wish to put on record my appreciation for those who have committed to work with me in the coming years as my advisors, a team so ably led by Ambassador Alfonso Quiñónez.

Distinguished representatives, as I stated in Fort Lauderdale, I see the OAS as a unique and common vehicle for resolving differences and setting shared goals that promote democracy, respect for the rule of law, social justice, economic development, security, and human rights. I hold a strong belief in the value of the inter-American system, especially in this organization which is, by far, one of our most effective hemispheric instruments for realizing our collective agenda—an agenda that must ultimately result in peace, solidarity, stability, and prosperity.

In this regard, the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter marks a moral, human, and political victory in the development of our organization and of the Americas. It emphasizes that democracy is a *sine qua non* for social, economic, and political development. At the same time, I hasten to remind member states that democracy does not grow organically in a vacuum. It requires vigilance and renewal. Democracy, you will agree, must also be cultivated and nurtured.

Nurturing democracy, in my mind, suggests that member states and the OAS should work together to encourage social justice, fight discrimination in all its forms, reduce poverty, and promote integral development. The structures of democracy must be continuously reinforced by resolve and by concrete actions that translate into economic development, opportunities for employment and education, human rights protection, responsible citizenship, good governance, human security, and political freedoms.



Democracy should also promote transparency and accountability. I am convinced that once people can experience, see, and share the fruits of democracy, they will be more likely to embrace and defend it.

Ladies and gentlemen, although democracy continues to take firmer roots in the Americas, several challenges remain in sister states, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Haiti. Increasing numbers of countries in our Hemisphere are facing the challenges of good governance, development and poverty, and democratic governability. In my view, the OAS needs to provide leadership in the debate on the underlying forces that cause social injustice, protest, and instability and that ultimately threaten democracy.

Consistent with the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, this organization and its leadership should stand ready to support, promote, and defend democracy. In addition, it is critical not only that representative democracy develop and flourish, but that elected officials entrusted with the noble duty of leadership always defend and promote the democratic interests and human rights of the people they serve. I therefore encourage this organization to intensify its efforts in fighting corruption and promoting good governance.

I recently returned from a visit with the Secretary General to the Republic of Haiti. Allow me to share with you my thoughts on this Caribbean nation. In my view, it is critically important that the OAS remain engaged in Haiti and continue to promote political and economic development in that country. Currently, the focus has to be on improving security in preparation for the upcoming local, legislative, and presidential elections. I call on the international community to continue its financial and technical support for free and fair elections, as well as to support the process of democratic governability after the installation of a new government in Haiti in February 2006.

During my tenure as Chair of the Permanent Council and as a staff member of the Secretariat, I witnessed firsthand the real and increasing expectations of the OAS on the part of member states and their citizens. We are expected to deliver high quality at a high pace! The reality, however, is that today, mandates and expectations exceed material and financial resources available to our organization.

I feel compelled at this point to remind member states that successful implementation of mandates is inextricably linked to the availability of financial resources. Therefore, it is incumbent on member states to do what is necessary to address this urgent financial situation.

Member states should also consider taking fresh approaches in examining the existing quota system in order to better reflect member states' capabilities and expectations, as well as increased mandates and the cost of implementing those mandates. The General Secretariat, in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly to address this matter, stands ready to work with you.

I am convinced that the OAS can be more effective by developing a more efficient system of assigning, prioritizing, and funding mandates. For example, member states may have to consider attaching sunset clauses to certain mandates, or be encouraged to take another look at the way the Permanent Council and its committees function.

This morning I had the pleasure of participating in a meeting of the Working Group on Procedures and Priorities to discuss ways to increase the efficiency of the Permanent Council and the

General Assembly. The debate was indeed encouraging, and I congratulate Peru and Canada for having taken the lead in this important exercise.

The Secretary General and I share common ideas on the need for restructuring within the Organization. We believe that there is a need to amend the existing organizational layout slightly so as to reflect the priorities we have to determine, taking into account the financial means. I look forward to working with him and all the member states on the very important task of helping the Organization deliver more and making sure it does so more efficiently.

No doubt there is room for improvement in our operations. In my view, the OAS can do more, and should do so in a more cost-effective, pragmatic, and timely manner. A reinvigorated and reformed institution will certainly result in better use of the available funds, improve its relevancy, and, hopefully, attract new resources.

The Secretariat will also have to promote synergies in-house to eliminate duplication and waste of time, energy, and opportunity. I am convinced that by strengthening the culture of cooperation, communication, and transparency, and by encouraging more efficient use of resources within the Organization, the OAS will help to create ownership at all levels within member states.

I agree with Secretary General Insulza that the OAS does not stand alone in achieving its mission. It is a part of an inter-American system and must therefore be viewed in that context. Each institution that forms part of the inter-American system must focus on its core strengths, but this should not obviate the need for enhanced cooperation and improved coordination. In making the OAS more efficient, we must ensure that programs undertaken by and within the Organization are not duplicative of work already being performed by other multilateral institutions. In short, we must promote and work towards complementarity.

In partnership with the Office of the Secretary General, we will seek to develop appropriate frameworks for interagency coordination within the OAS and with multilateral organizations. I am firmly committed to strengthening relations and expanding collaboration among the inter-American institutions.

I also support the call for an intensified consultative process among regional and subregional integration systems, specialized agencies, the private sector, and civil society. With this active engagement, we can create a constructive and important platform for executing the mandates of the Summits of the Americas in a more coordinated manner.

I believe that a more effective and productive OAS requires a more inclusive approach. It calls for a dedicated and focused public outreach program, as well as promoting greater communication and coordination of activities and approaches between the Organization and civil society, the private sector, and permanent observers.

Many of us are of the view that further economic integration and trade liberalization within the context of ongoing trade negotiations continues to hold great promise for our peoples. It is, however, imperative that the results of these negotiations and the new rules do not socially or economically marginalize certain regions, countries, and groups. Vulnerable and small economies require and should be given time to adjust to competition as our hemispheric trade barriers fall, and attention must be paid to the real value of special and differential treatment.

I believe that increased emphasis on disaster preparedness and mitigation is urgently required. We must strengthen the work already being undertaken by the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CSH) to identify and coordinate strategies to improve preparedness, coordinate regional policies, and promote better resource mobilization and support when disaster strikes. I am pleased to report that shortly, the OAS, under the leadership of Secretary General Insulza, will convene a meeting between the agencies and institutions involved in disaster management to discuss a much more harmonized approach, focusing on capacity-building programs, so that we do not need to start over annually when hurricanes and other climactic forces hit the region.

The increased prevalence of natural disasters is a tangible reminder of the changed dynamic of security in our hemisphere. I am sure you will agree with me that the Declaration on Security in the Americas is a significant step forward for our hemisphere and provides pragmatic and useful approaches for collective action. The magnitude of these challenges and the need for greater coordination reflect the multidimensional nature of security in our hemisphere. The OAS must continue to work with member states to deal with traditional threats to security, but at the same time, the OAS must be prepared to address new and existing nontraditional threats, such as natural disasters, transnational organized crime, violence, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, terrorism, and trafficking in illegal drugs and small firearms.

I also encourage member states to strengthen existing regional and hemispheric mechanisms, such as the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE), and the groups of experts on cyber-crime, money laundering, and corruption. I also hope the OAS will become much more involved in adopting measures to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished permanent representatives, and permanent observers, the Organization of American States should be a relentless advocate of preventive and public diplomacy. In this regard, I hope that the Organization can take better advantage of the Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States. As the Organization reorganizes to better serve the interests of member states, I envisage an enhanced role for the National Offices. I see them positioned to provide reliable information, promote technical cooperation, facilitate development and democracy, help member states in developing policies that alleviate poverty, exchange and share best practices, and, most importantly, sensitize local populations to the value and work of the Organization. National Offices can also be encouraged, within the structure and programmatic goals of the OAS, to leverage the resources of the Organization to mobilize additional funds.

I applaud the Secretary General for his efforts in public diplomacy since assuming office. I am sure that discussions in additional capitals, like those held in the United States recently, will serve to better promote the work and currency of this hemispheric body. I welcome the representatives of the U.S. Congress here today; your presence augurs well for greater cooperation between the OAS and the legislative branches of our member states. I look forward as well to increasing collaboration with the permanent observers and the international community to realize the collective dreams of our peoples.

I hold the fundamental belief that the protection and promotion of human rights is non-negotiable. The progress we continue to make in this regard and the increased emphasis on the protection of human rights in our hemisphere indicate that we are on the right path. I join the

Secretary General in calling for greater cooperation and dialogue with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the judicial branches of national governments of member states.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, distinguished permanent representatives, Mr. Secretary General, ladies and gentlemen, as Assistant Secretary General of this important hemispheric body, I will work to strengthen the Organization, improve its institutional and political functions, and promote greater efficiency and relevance. I shall work to sharpen the Organization's resolve to promote democracy and good governance throughout the Americas, and I look forward to working with member states in a pragmatic and programmatic manner to ensure the central importance of integral development.

I hold firm the belief that a holistic approach is required to forge common approaches based on shared visions and collective agendas that will allow us to develop a common hemispheric identity that is based on ownership, accountability, mutual respect and understanding, and solidarity.

I thank you very much for your attention. [Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Muchas gracias, señor Secretario General Adjunto, por sus importantes palabras. Le auguramos pleno éxito en sus nuevas funciones.

Se levanta la sesión.

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