

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA
CELEBRADA
EL 21 DE FEBRERO DE 2012

Aprobada en la sesión del 8 de mayo de 2013

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CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 21 DE FEBRERO DE 2013

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y veinte de la mañana del jueves 21 de febrero de 2013, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para recibir a la excelentísima señora Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores de Guyana. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador John E. Beale, Representante Permanente de Barbados
y Vicepresidente del Consejo Permanente
Embajador Bayney R. Karran, Representante Permanente de Guyana
Embajadora La Celia A. Prince, Representante Permanente de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Embajador Nestor Mendez, Representante Permanente de Belize
Embajador Roy Chaderton Matos, Representante Permanente de Venezuela
Embajadora Gillian M. S. Bristol, Representante Permanente de Grenada
Embajadora Carmen Lomellin, Representante Permanente de los Estados Unidos
Embajador Darío Paya, Representante Permanente de Chile
Embajadora María Isabel Salvador, Representante Permanente del Ecuador
Embajador Allan Culham, Representante Permanente del Canadá
Embajadora Jacinth Lorna Henry-Martin, Representante Permanente de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Embajador Diego Pary, Representante Permanente de Bolivia
Embajadora Niermala Hindori-Badrising, Representante Permanente de Suriname
Embajador Walter Jorge Alban Peralta, Representante Permanente del Perú
Embajador Andrés González Díaz, Representante Permanente de Colombia
Embajador José Rodrigo Viemann de León, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Embajador Milton Romani Gerner, Representante Permanente del Uruguay
Embajadora Sonia Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía
Embajador Martín Sannemann, Representante Permanente del Paraguay
Embajador Joaquín Maza, Representante Permanente de El Salvador
Ministro Martín Gómez Bustillo, Representante Interino de la Argentina
Ministro Consejero Breno de Souza Brasil Dias da Costa, Representante Interino del Brasil
Embajador José de Jesús Martínez González, Representante Interino de Panamá
Ministra Consejera Cynthia Solis Lizano, Representante Interina de Costa Rica
Ministra Consejera Mayerlyn Cordero Díaz, Representante Alterna de la República Dominicana
Primera Secretaria Joy-Dee Davis-Lake, Representante Alterna de Antigua y Barbuda
Ministro Consejero Luís Exequiel Alvarado Ramírez, Representante Alterno de Nicaragua
Consejera Avianne Conyette Boney, Representante Alterna de Trinidad y Tobago
Segunda Secretaria Kimberley Elizabeth Lam, Representante Alterna del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Embajador Ramses Radhames Lagos Valle, Representante Alterno de Honduras
Primer Secretario Nazaire Altemar, Representante Alterno de Haití
Ministra Julia Elizabeth Hyatt, Representante Alterna de Jamaica

El PRESIDENTE: Estimadas y estimados Representantes, muy buenos días. Les solicitamos y agradecemos que, por favor, tomen sus asientos.

[Pausa.]

Señoras y señores Embajadoras y Embajadores Representantes Permanentes y Alternos, señores Observadores Permanentes, declaro abierta esta sesión extraordinaria del Consejo Permanente, convocada para recibir a la excelentísima señora Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio Exterior de la República de Guyana.

Señora Ministra, en mi carácter de Presidente del Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, me complace recibirla en esta Casa de las Américas y ofrecerle una muy cordial bienvenida. Con mucho gusto recibimos y saludamos también a la distinguida comitiva que la acompaña. Sean todos ustedes muy bienvenidos.

Señora Ministra, usted representa aquí al pueblo guyanés, al que nos unen lazos de sólida amistad y cooperación y al que saludamos afectuosamente.

PALABRAS DEL JEFE DE GABINETE DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL,
A CARGO DE LA SECRETARÍA GENERAL

El PRESIDENTE: Tengo ahora el gusto de invitar al Embajador Hugo de Zela a presentar los saludos en representación de la Secretaría General de la OEA. Embajador de Zela, usted tiene el uso de la palabra.

El JEFE DE GABINETE DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL, A CARGO DE LA SECRETARÍA GENERAL: Muchas gracias, señor Presidente.

Señor Presidente, Madam Minister:

It is a great pleasure to welcome once again the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Guyana, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, to the Organization of American States and the Permanent Council today. On behalf of Secretary General Insulza and the OAS, we thank you for your presence in the House of the Americas.

The holding of this meeting highlights the strong commitment of the Government of the Republic of Guyana and its President, Donald Ramotar, to the OAS and reflects the importance that Guyana has always given to the Organization of American States.

As a founding member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the seat of CARICOM, your country has envisioned from early on the need for greater and deeper integration in the Hemisphere, playing a unique role in bridging the Caribbean and South America. It is, after all, the only English-speaking country in South America.

Precisely in this area, Minister Birkett has distinguished herself through her constant efforts in advocating the need for meaningful integration that promotes sustainable development and social inclusion, for the benefit of our citizens.

Integration has also been a challenge in Guyana. Your country, Minister, has shown resilience and has celebrated the diversity of its peoples in the various walks of life and spheres of influence. To some, Guyana can be described as a melting pot with great cultural expressions that have served to strengthen its society.

I take this opportunity to express to you, Minister, that here at the OAS, we are also working steadily on these issues. Not long ago, as you know, the General Assembly approved the Social Charter of the Americas, a very important and much needed complement to the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and we are now very actively engaged in the negotiation of a Plan of Action to put into effect the agreements reached on the Social Charter.

In matters of integration, we are also moving forward on the internal front. Under renewed leadership, we are trying to launch a new effort to revitalize our development area, the Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI). We expect to promptly put forward, for the consideration of the member states, some ideas about how to revitalize this priority area and pillar of the OAS. We are certain that the contribution of Guyana to these endeavors will be very useful, taking into account your country's experience in these matters.

The development strategy to which your government has committed itself involves the pursuit of multifaceted political, constitutional, and economic reforms, which can be trying at times. Nevertheless, in the last years, this strategy has served to make the country stronger, and this was demonstrated in the positive economic growth rates Guyana has been experiencing. We are aware that Guyana has had to face many serious challenges. However, we have also witnessed how you have worked without pause in an effort to build a more resilient economy and, at the same time, a more cohesive and inclusive social fabric.

Building citizenship, giving citizens more opportunities, and creating a safe environment for the full development of the people are goals we all share and are core values of this organization. The OAS stands ready to support the efforts of our member states in furthering their commitments to the promotion and consolidation of democracy and development for the citizens of the Americas.

Thank you very much for being here today, Minister Rodrigues-Birkett.

Gracias, señor Presidente.

El PRESIDENTE: Muchas gracias, Embajador de Zela, por su intervención.

PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: Señoras y señores, estimados colegas:

Nuestra ilustre visitante, la Ministra señora Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, recibió su formación académica en administración de negocios en el Canadá. En su país obtuvo un grado en el campo de trabajos sociales, realizando sus estudios al mismo tiempo que la gerencia del proyecto SIMAP.

La Ministra Rodrigues-Birkett ocupó la jefatura del Ministerio de Asuntos Amerindios antes de ser designada como Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio Exterior en abril del 2008, siendo la primera mujer en ocupar la cartera de relaciones exteriores en su país.

La gestión de la señora Ministra al frente del servicio diplomático de Guyana se ha distinguido por el fortalecimiento de las relaciones con sus vecinos, lo que le ha permitido el desarrollo de importantes emprendimientos conjuntos en temas como seguridad marítima y cambio climático, seguridad alimentaria y estabilidad financiera.

La importancia que la Ministra Rodrigues-Birkett ha dado a los temas sociales ha demostrado el liderazgo en su país hacia la obtención de los Objetivos del Milenio. En ese sentido, la señora Ministra ha reportado el progreso alcanzado en Guyana en los campos de educación, salud e igualdad de género, erradicación de la pobreza, reducción de la transmisión del SIDA de madre a hijos mediante estrategias progresivas e integradas que incluyen la prudente administración macroeconómica de políticas sociales y fiscales y la priorización del desarrollo social y de infraestructura.

En su carácter de Presidenta de la Unión de Naciones Sudamericanas (UNASUR), en su momento se vio reconocido el compromiso de la Ministra Rodrigues-Birkett a fortalecer alianzas encaminadas a promover el desarrollo de los pueblos de la región.

Las labores de la Ministra se extienden también hacia esfuerzos que buscan la consolidación de una cultura que propicie y promueva la paz de manera que todos los ciudadanos podamos disfrutar de la democracia, los derechos humanos y el desarrollo sostenible.

Señora Ministra, las políticas implementadas y los logros alcanzados en su carrera al servicio de los ciudadanos de su país y de la región son notables y por ello su presencia en este foro nos complace mucho y nos honra.

PALABRAS DE LA MINISTRA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE GUYANA

El PRESIDENTE: Señora Ministra Rodrigues-Birkett, con mucho gusto le ofrezco ahora el uso de la palabra.

La MINISTRA DE RELACIONES EXTERIORES DE GUYANA: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Representative of the Secretary General, your excellencies permanent representatives, distinguished alternate representatives, excellencies permanent observers, ladies and gentlemen:

Let me first thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your kind introduction and for convening this special meeting to afford me the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering. It is an honor to be in this hallowed chamber, the very name of which is symbolic of continental liberty and pan American integration.

I am delighted to be here and to meet with you all during this week, which coincides with the anniversary of an event of historic importance to the people of Guyana. Mr. Chairman, excellencies,

250 years ago this week, the slave population in Berbice, Guyana's easternmost county, rebelled against their oppressors. In what has become known as the Berbice Slave Rebellion, the slaves put the Dutch plantation owners to flight and expelled them from the colony. The slaves' leader, Cuffy, who is Guyana's national hero, assumed the governorship of the colony and prohibited the return of the slave owners with a force of 3,000 men and women under his command. The uprising was eventually crushed by a coalition of Europeans employing superior force, and the slaves were killed with unspeakable barbarity.

The Berbice Slave Rebellion set off other uprisings in the region. It had threatened the presence of Europeans in the Americas while it lasted, and it foreshadowed the Haitian Revolution, which it preceded by more than 40 years.

Through the ages, the people of Guyana have had to rebel, in many other instances, against the system of slavery and other forms of subjugation which replaced it, against foreigners and locals alike, before their freedom was finally won. In the wake of such historic experiences, Mr. Chairman, in Guyana today, like elsewhere in our hemisphere, freedom and democracy are cherished principles that are vigorously strengthened and resolutely defended. It is against this background that the principles enshrined and inscribed in the Democratic Charter form the cornerstone of Guyana's democratic ideals.

Prior to obtaining its independence from Britain, Guyana was a victim of Cold War machinations. The Constitution and the electoral machinery, which had been established by the colonial authorities, were subverted by the very colonizers themselves in order to distort the democratic will of the electorate. Indeed, for several years following independence, these machinations continued. Covert operations were executed, bringing in their wake political turmoil and violence, repression, and economic and social degradation.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, today, just 20 years since Guyana achieved democratic rule, the country has undergone a transformation from an economic basket case and a pariah among the community of democratic nations. It has more than tripled its gross domestic product (GDP), vastly improved and expanded health care and housing, invested heavily in education and infrastructure, and restored national pride and confidence.

At the international level, Guyana is demonstrating an ever-increasing commitment to integration, and it has garnered international attention for its initiatives to deal with challenges, such as climate change and poverty alleviation. We still have a far way to go, but the foundation has been laid.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, none of these developments would have transpired had Guyana not received support and solidarity from member states of the Hemisphere and benefitted from the work of the OAS in the promotion of democracy. I wish to refer in particular to the OAS's electoral observation missions (EOMs) in my country, which have played a role in ensuring free, fair, and democratic elections. I wish today to reiterate our appreciation, as did President Donald Ramotar when he addressed this body, for the result of their work.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, this renewed faith and confidence in the country by the populace are behind the advances made in Guyana's integration with the rest of the region in recent times. In her convenient geographic location, which sees her arms warmly embracing the Caribbean and her

feet firmly planted in South America, Guyana is satisfying her long-standing aspiration to bridge the span between the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and those of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). Guyana, where the headquarters of CARICOM is located, is the only English-speaking country to have served as the chair of UNASUR and of the Rio Group, which is now subsumed in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Evidently, our countries have benefitted from the steady progress that has been made toward integration in the Hemisphere. I am aware, Mr. Chairman, that there are a few who question the need for the several subregional integration mechanisms that now exist. However, for Guyana, this is a welcome sign that indicates that the pace of integration is ever advancing, in recognition that only together can we overcome the major challenges of our times and maximize the many opportunities presented to our hemisphere, which will evidently lead to the improvement of the lives of our people.

The South American continent, for example, is proceeding with its integration process, with a focus on socioeconomic development and infrastructural linkages. Shared values, collective actions, and a commitment to cooperation are the key ingredients for better integration among our peoples.

CELAC, UNASUR, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), the Central American Integration System (SICA), CARICOM, and others all have valid agendas and are all making positive and important contributions to regional integration. Nonetheless, the most outstanding accomplishments over the years in strengthening and upholding democracy, human rights, integral development, and security have been achieved by the OAS. The organization is, and will remain, the Hemisphere's indispensable platform for dialogue, the promotion of cooperation, sharing best practices, confidence-building, and problem-solving.

During the course of its existence, this organization has also demonstrated the flexibility to adapt to the steadily evolving needs of its members while maintaining adherence to its core values. In the years to come, further adaptations and adjustments will be required in order to cater to the changing realities of the Hemisphere. In this process, we must entertain no doubts about the continuing relevance and value of the OAS and its future. Then and now, Guyana's support and commitment to the Organization will be unwavering. Lest we forget, this was the nature of the unifying vision that was positively articulated by so many of our leaders at the Sixth Summit of the Americas, less than a year ago.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, the OAS today finds itself at a crucial juncture. The Organization is engaged in a series of debates in an attempt to reassess its functions and its capacity. The ongoing reforms, aimed at prioritizing mandates, rationalizing the budgetary and administrative necessities, strengthening the human rights system, and determining the future of the defense system are of importance not only to the Organization as a whole but to the nature of inter-American cooperation.

As we have come to recognize, the exercise of trimming and synchronizing mandates, while optimizing the management of resources, is a complex and sensitive undertaking. It requires a clear-eyed focus on our collective goals, with the key watchword being transparency. In the final analysis, the task of resolving budgetary and administrative questions will remain inconclusive so long as there remains discord over questions of policy. This process can easily slide into gridlock if we lack the determination to bridge any political gaps that may exist. The mistrust and the lack of will that could be engendered could lead to a fatal paralysis, and the ones to lose out will be our citizens.

The people of our hemisphere give scant attention to stale debates about political and ideological chastity. They want solutions to poverty, crime, and unemployment. Like the instantaneous communication that advanced technology has brought, so, too, our people expect us to respond to their needs with alacrity.

The overriding collective need is for the OAS to rationalize its functions so it can work more effectively for a better hemisphere. We must maintain our resolve so that we can arrive at solutions in the interest of our citizens, beyond our political differences. This can be achieved if the OAS is not seen as a platform to heighten divisions and if we focus collectively on the real worth and value of the Organization.

Moreover, it is of fundamental importance that every member state and every subregion have the conviction that they enjoy equal status, that their needs and interests are being fully addressed, and that the Organization is fulfilling its obligations equitably. Since the Charter does not ascribe a difference in priority to the pillars of the Organization, they should each merit equal value and importance.

We have noted with interest that the Secretary General has put forward “A Strategic Vision of the Organization,” and we commend him for taking this step. We trust that this vision can serve as a useful point of departure in the ensuing deliberations concerning the future of the OAS.

Mr. Chairman, the CARICOM region is endowed with natural resources and immense talent that ought to provide a solid basis for the development and prosperity of our societies. Our subregion is also generally regarded as a bastion of democracy and integration in the Hemisphere. However, economic and social developments are being stymied by the vulnerabilities that are peculiar to our subregion and are often beyond our control.

The special security concerns of Caribbean states continue to engage the attention of the OAS. Bearing in mind that the area of multidimensional security encompasses a wide range of threats, I would like to refer briefly to the drug trade and its effects on our nations, and to refer as well to the issue of climate change.

The drug trade and the level of crime and violence that trail in its wake are sapping our societies and, particularly, the lives of our youth. Transnational organized crime has become more audacious and more mobile, aided by high profitability, porous borders, easy access to weaponry, and limits to state capacity. With criminal proceeds accounting for an estimated 2 to 5 percent of GDP, the effects of transnational organized crime on citizen security, social development, and the rule of law are matters that need to be addressed with increased urgency.

Over the span of time, illicit drugs have consistently grown less expensive, more potent, and more accessible. If drug cartels can outspend the national security budgets of some member states, this is an untenable situation that can lead in only one direction. It is time to recognize that our current strategies need reviewing and our paradigms must be rearranged if we are to effectively combat the drug trade. It is time that consumer nations reevaluate their approach and the nature of their responsibility. It is time to recognize that there will be no viable solutions in the absence of effective measures to address demand.

The drug trade and other transborder criminal activities can only be curbed through stepped-up cooperation by all member states across the board. The operatives involved in illegal drugs have shown a high level of cooperation and networking across countries and continents. If we are to win this battle, we must demonstrate an even higher level of cooperation and networking in order to be ahead of the game.

It is on account of the importance that we attach to security issues that Guyana has decided to serve as Chair of the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CSH) this year. We wish to urge renewed efforts aimed at guaranteeing citizen security, and I am pleased to inform you that the heads of government of the Caribbean Community, just two days ago in Haiti, adopted a 14-point strategy on security in CARICOM.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, even as we direct our efforts to fighting illegal drug trafficking and attendant crimes, it must be recognized that the greatest long-term threat to the economic viability of the Caribbean is posed by climate change. I will not seek to repeat all of the scientific findings, as they are well known. The World Bank estimates the potential total annual impact of climate change on CARICOM countries to be 11.3 percent of their total GDP. Nearly one fifth of these losses are likely to be linked to the effects of sea level rise, including loss of land and damage to buildings and to tourism infrastructure.

National authorities and the scientific community agree that the region is already beginning to suffer from some of these effects. Indeed, several of our Caribbean countries are in a perpetual state of rebuilding. It is beyond dispute, Mr. Chairman, excellencies, that many small-island and low-lying coastal developing states can suffer irreparable reversal without ambitious action by the international community to reduce global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and support for these states to adapt to these effects.

In response to these challenges, in 2009, CARICOM heads of government issued the Liliendaal Declaration on Climate Change and Development. Named after the place in Guyana where the headquarters of CARICOM is located, the Liliendaal Declaration is the instrument by which CARICOM has committed itself to collective action in the fight against climate change.

The Declaration accords recognition to the value of standing forests and their role in mitigating the effects of climate change. Taking into account the geographic areas of Guyana, Suriname, and Belize, 50 percent of CARICOM is under forest cover. These factors have helped to shape Guyana's objective of reducing carbon emissions by avoiding deforestation and forest degradation and by implementing sustainable forest management and reforestation. Our strategy is to pursue pathways to economic and social development, based on a Low Carbon Development Strategy. This approach would allow Guyana to place its forests, which comprise 80 percent of our national territory, under long-term protection, while stimulating public and private investments for clean energy. These measures would support our goal of long-term economic growth alongside a commitment to globally accepted social and environmental safeguards.

In partnership with the Government of Norway, we have established a mechanism that rewards Guyana for its stewardship over its forest resources. This mechanism can serve as a model of cooperation on climate change for forest nations. It serves as a reminder that all nations, big and small, have a role to play to overcome common obstacles.

Mr. Chairman, excellencies, I am aware that my presentation to you has focused more on the challenges we have to confront together, but there is one more to which I must add my voice, and that is the issue of differentiation or graduation, which is touted by its authors as a means of ensuring that development assistance goes to the countries most in need. The problem with this new construct is that it uses GDP per capita as a central factor in determining vulnerability, without considering in totality the many vulnerabilities faced by countries in the Caribbean.

I have spoken about the impacts of climate change, the drug trade, and porous borders. In addition, some countries in the Caribbean are heavily indebted and still trying to survive following the financial crisis. If we use GDP per capita, countries like The Bahamas and Barbados will be considered high income, while many others will be categorized as middle income, and, therefore, disqualified from further assistance, or will see their assistance considerably reduced. This will set back many of our countries. Mr. Chairman, excellencies, we therefore seek the support of all in this regard.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished representatives, the imperatives of our time are the legitimate needs of our people for greater security and prosperity. Nations, whether small and vulnerable or large and strong, must be able to stand shoulder to shoulder and count on the solidarity of each other to confront the challenges of today. We, the guardians of our peoples' interests, must summon the commitment, flexibility, and solidarity that are needed to achieve their just aspirations. We cannot afford for succeeding generations to look back on this era as a lost opportunity. Let us exert the will to cooperate so that we make a reality of their aspirations.

I thank you very much for your gracious attention, and I wish you the best in your future deliberations.

I thank you.

[Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Excelencia, muchas gracias por su mensaje.

Respetuosamente solicito a los distinguidos Representantes que permanezcan en sus asientos mientras la señora Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio Exterior de Guyana, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, y su comitiva se retiran del recinto.

[La Ministra de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio Exterior de Guyana, acompañada por su comitiva, se retira de la sala.]

Señoras y señores Representantes y Observadores Permanentes, honorables invitados, muchas gracias. Se levanta esta sesión extraordinaria del Consejo Permanente.

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