

CONSEJO PERMANENTE



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ACTA
DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA
CELEBRADA
EL 10 DE ABRIL DE 2013

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CONSEJO PERMANENTE DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LOS ESTADOS AMERICANOS

ACTA DE LA SESIÓN EXTRAORDINARIA CELEBRADA EL 10 DE ABRIL DE 2013

En la ciudad de Washington, a las diez y veintidós de la mañana del miércoles 10 de abril de 2013, celebró sesión extraordinaria el Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos para recibir a la excelentísima señora Diane Ablonczy, Ministra de Estado para Asuntos Exteriores (Américas y Asuntos Consulares) del Canadá. Presidió la sesión el Embajador Arturo Ulises Vallarino Bartuano, Representante Permanente de Panamá y Presidente del Consejo Permanente. Asistieron los siguientes miembros:

Embajador Bayney R. Karran, Representante Permanente de Guyana
Embajador Duly Brutus, Representante Permanente de Haití
Embajador Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres, Representante Permanente de Nicaragua
Embajador Nestor Mendez, Representante Permanente de Belize
Embajador John E. Beale, Representante Permanente de Barbados
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
Embajador Hubert J. Charles, Representante Permanente del Commonwealth de Dominica
Embajador Allan Culham, Representante Permanente del Canadá
Embajadora Jacinth Lorna Henry-Martin, Representante Permanente de Saint Kitts y Nevis
Embajador Roberto Bernardo Saladín Selin, Representante Permanente de la República Dominicana
Embajador Edgar Ugalde Álvarez, Representante Permanente de Costa Rica
Embajador José Rodrigo Vielmann de León, Representante Permanente de Guatemala
Embajadora Sonia Johnny, Representante Permanente de Santa Lucía
Embajador Joaquín Alexander Maza Martinelli, Representante Permanente de El Salvador
Ministro Consejero Breno de Souza Brasil Dias da Costa, Representante Interino del Brasil
Ministra Consejera Carmen Luisa Velásquez de Visbal, Representante Interina de Venezuela
Consejero Freddie Cleveland Tucker, Representante Interino del Commonwealth de las Bahamas
Ministra Consejera Ann-Marie Layne Campbell, Representante Alterna de Antigua y Barbuda
Ministro Ricardo Jorge Massot, Representante Alterno de la Argentina
Ministro Consejero Omari Seitu Williams, Representante Alterno de San Vicente y las Granadinas
Embajador José de Jesús Martínez González, Representante Alterno de Panamá
Consejera Dana Avion Wallace, Representante Alterna de Trinidad y Tobago
Ministro Raúl Salazar Cosio, Representante Alterno del Perú
Embajador Fernando Augusto Suárez Moreno, Representante Alterno del Ecuador
Ministro José Luis Ramírez, Representante Alterno de Colombia
Embajador Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes, Representante Alterno de Honduras
Ministra Dolores Jiménez, Representante Alterna de México
Consejero Kenneth J. Amoksi, Representante Alterno de Suriname
Ministro José Eduardo Pereira Sosa, Representante Alterno del Paraguay
Ministra María Isabel Marca Choque, Representante Alterna de Bolivia
Primera Secretaria Verónica Paula Rolando Urruzmendi, Representante Alterna del Uruguay
Ministra Julia Elizabeth Hyatt, Representante Alterna de Jamaica

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: Habiendo indicado la Secretaría que existe el quórum reglamentario, declaramos abierta esta sesión extraordinaria del Consejo Permanente, convocada para recibir a la excelentísima señora Diane Ablonczy, Ministra de Estado para Asuntos Exteriores (Américas y Asuntos Consulares) del Canadá.

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 a esta sesión. Con mucho gusto recibimos y saludamos también a la distinguida comitiva que la acompaña. Sean todos ustedes bienvenidos.

PALABRAS DEL SECRETARIO GENERAL

El PRESIDENTE: Tengo ahora el gusto de invitar al Secretario General de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, doctor José Miguel Insulza, quien pronunciará las palabras iniciales de esta sesión. Señor Secretario General, usted tiene la palabra.

El SECRETARIO GENERAL: Muchas gracias, Presidente. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is with great honor that we welcome today the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Ms. Diane Ablonczy.

Since the early 1990s, as we all know, Canadian relations with Latin America have become increasingly stronger. Canada's acceptance into the Organization of American States in 1990 marked the strengthening of that interaction. Along with the political and economic benefits of that union came greater support for democratic ideals and free trade discussions, as well as other social and cultural concerns.

Five years ago, I had the honor to subscribe with Canada an arrangement to enhance that cooperation as a key piece of Canada's trade strategy for engagement in the Americas. This initiative has undeniably enhanced the role of the OAS as a multilateral institution in the Americas and as one of the major forums for development cooperation. We have worked very closely to advance our common agenda on democracy, security, and prosperity.

The uniqueness of Canada's engagement with the OAS resides in the fact that few donors like her have allowed us to include programs that enhance the modernization goals of the OAS. The cooperation we receive is results-based, not exclusively by activity; this, in turn, has enabled us to forge a comprehensive vision of our institution and provides us with an overview of where we want the OAS to be.

Canada's commitment to the OAS has led to a stronger democratic practice in the region. It has served to extend the development agenda in the Hemisphere, as well as to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in the overall process of the OAS.

In very concrete ways, Canada has shown its commitment to a more prosperous hemisphere by facilitating assistance to member states as they strive to grow their economies and provide new opportunities for their citizens.

The current OAS-CIDA Cooperation Plan has provided funding required by the General Secretariat to help member states strengthen their capacity to design and adopt public policies, legal frameworks, and programs to promote competitiveness, productivity, innovation, as well as the growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, especially those owned by women, and their access to national, regional, and global markets. By concentrating our efforts on socioeconomic issues, we are inherently trying to enhance and facilitate the political and institutional stability of the region. This shows the importance of cooperation as an instrument for democratic and institutional strengthening, an objective shared by all of us.

We are grateful for Canada's permanent support to our special missions during crises in the region, as well as to our ever-more-frequent electoral observation missions (EOMs). We also appreciate Canada's support for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and for political dialogue in the Hemisphere. It shows that there is a strong possibility to build a full program with a country that balances all the areas of the Organization—political and democratic security; conflict resolution; development; and human rights—a program from which we have very much benefitted.

When Canada first engaged the OAS during the regular session of the General Assembly in 1989, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, said:

Canada's joining of the OAS represents not so much a decision to become a member of an organization as it does a decision to become a partner in this hemisphere. For too long, Canadians have seen this hemisphere as our house; it is now time to make it our home.

I welcome you, therefore, with great pleasure, Minister Diane Ablonczy, to your home, the House of the Americas. I am very grateful for the support that you have given us over the years. Bienvenida a la Casa de las Américas.

El PRESIDENTE: Muchas gracias, señor Secretario General.

PALABRAS DEL PRESIDENTE DEL CONSEJO PERMANENTE

El PRESIDENTE: Señora Ministra, como acaba de observar el señor Secretario General, las iniciativas canadienses en las Américas así como el compromiso del Gobierno de su país con los objetivos compartidos por el Hemisferio y los propósitos y funciones de la Organización de los Estados Americanos son bien conocidas. El apoyo de su país a la OEA y a sus Estados Miembros es también muy apreciado por los integrantes de este Consejo.

Honorable señora Ablonczy, los ideales que usted persigue y los logros que ha alcanzado en su carrera al servicio de los ciudadanos de su país son notables y por ello su presencia en este foro mucho nos complace y nos honra.

Al recibirla hoy en esta sesión, deseamos saludar cálidamente al noble y leal pueblo canadiense con el que nos unen lazos de cooperación que cada día se fortalecen y vigorizan más.

PALABRAS DE LA MINISTRA DE ESTADO PARA ASUNTOS EXTERIORES
(AMÉRICA Y ASUNTOS CONSULARES) DEL CANADÁ

El PRESIDENTE: Con gusto, señora Ministra, le ofrezco ahora el uso de la palabra.

La MINISTRA DE ESTADO PARA ASUNTOS EXTERIORES (AMÉRICA Y ASUNTOS CONSULARES) DEL CANADÁ: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Secretary General, for that introduction.

Canada is indeed a very good friend of the Organization of American States, and very appreciative, Secretary General, of your leadership and of the hard work of all of you here. It's a pleasure to be here. Many of you we know well, and it's good to see you again. It's good also to get acquainted with some of you who are newer members of this organization. We look forward to working with you very much.

And so, excellencies, distinguished guests, staff of the General Secretariat, colleagues, I sincerely thank you for allowing me to take some of your valuable time to share some of Canada's priorities and observations about the work of the OAS.

Members of the Canadian Delegation are here to cheer me on. You know, they want to make sure I'm not too nervous talking to all of you high-level ambassadors!

It's no secret, colleagues, that for Canada, the Organization of American States is a key, central, and indispensable venue for cooperation with our hemispheric partners. As you know, there are other multilateral organizations in this hemisphere, but the only one in which Canada has the privilege of being a member is the OAS, so we value it very much.

We have a number of shared goals about which I want to talk. You are aware, of course, that the Secretary General and I were recently at a high-level economic forum in West Palm Beach. It was very hard to drag us to West Palm Beach, but we were brave and we went there where it was warm and the palm trees were waving in the breeze. It was a very good economic forum, but it brought home to us, yet again, that the global community is not yet fully out from under the shadow of the financial crisis that struck in 2008.

We also know that our peoples are considering different visions for the future of our hemisphere, and that's not surprising. People don't always think alike. In fact, if you're married, you know that very well. [Risas.] But we believe, because some of these uncertainties and this instability that we've experienced, that there's never been a greater need for a strong, purposeful, and well-supported OAS.

We also see that the face of the world is changing. In the aftermath of the global recession, traditional economic powers are struggling to regain their market share. At the same time, it is exciting that new and emerging economies, including many in our own region are experiencing the bulk of the growth in the global economy. Mr. Chairman, your country is a shining example.

So it is our opinion, colleagues, that nowhere is this rise of economic power more impressive than right here in the Americas. It's clear that the Americas are truly coming into their own

economically but also politically. And I know that many of you feel that that's long overdue and it's a very exciting new dynamic.

Recognizing both the economic and the geopolitical importance of the Americas, Prime Minister Harper made it a foreign policy priority for Canada in 2007, not too long after we took office, to focus a lot of our time and attention on our own neighborhood. The Americas is our region. We live here. We have many friends here, and this is where we want to put our focus.

Canada's engagement in the Americas, then, has brought our government together to work with partners like you in the region to advance shared objectives, and we are putting forward three goals:

1. To boost mutual economic opportunity, and we do this largely by breaking down trade barriers.
2. To strengthen security and institutions. We want to have safer streets in all of our countries. A fundamental requirement for each and every citizen is to be safe where they live and where they walk.
3. To foster lasting relationships by building stronger people-to-people ties. You know the old saying, colleagues—at least it's an old saying in English—"It's not what you know but who you know." You've heard that, haven't you? And it's so true! We want to work with people we know, with whom we have a connection, and whom we've grown to trust. It's extremely important.

Now, these three goals are supported by our commitment to democratic values, including respect for human rights. As you know, Canada is deeply committed to these goals, and that has led to some heated debate from time to time, but we do not back down in any way, shape, or form from our deep belief in the right of people to enjoy democracy and basic human rights.

First of all, Canada is convinced that economic growth and opportunity hinges on democracy and security. In other words, you're not going to have one of those without the others. They're tremendously interconnected. And so, colleagues, we consider the OAS a strong and steadfast partner in achieving those results and economic growth, supported by growing democracy and security. That is why, since 2007, Canada has increased our focus; deepened our engagement; and invested time, effort, and funds in our own region, the Americas. We do this through official development assistance (ODA); multilateral contributions, particularly to this body; and security-focused programming. We've been working very hard to create economic opportunities, bolster security and institutions, and foster lasting relationships that will benefit all of us. We've had some great successes to date.

The Economic Agenda

First, I want to talk about the economic agenda. We're very fortunate that many of our member states have built strong networks of free trade agreements and other investment and trade links right across the region. We strongly believe that sustainable investment—that is, investment that is happy where it is and in which the parties aren't on the verge of picking up their marbles and going home, so to speak—and sustainable trade are creating, where they're strong, jobs and income.

Colleagues, aren't jobs and good incomes the best way to improve peoples' lives? Not government programs or handouts; just having something to do that brings in an income and allows you the dignity of earning a living and supporting your families and communities. We think that is absolutely key.

Canada has had a lot of experience in increasing trade and commercial economic ties. We've been at it for a while now, and we have seen that this is the best way to increase prosperity and growth. It started, of course, with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the 1980s, and there was a huge debate about that. I was pretty young then, but I remember some of it.

There were accusations that Canada was going to sell out its culture to the big bad United States, that we were going to lose our sovereignty over our water and other Canadian resources, and that health care was going to be completely destroyed. Of course, none of that happened, and Canada and the United States have both benefited enormously from NAFTA. Now, Mexico is the third *amigo* in that trade agreement. Also, the benefits are very clear.

Using NAFTA as a guidepost, Canada is today working hard to further increase two-way trade and investment with our regional partners. We've been met with a very warm welcome by many of our friends, including your country, Mr. Chairman. The Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Panama came into effect on April 1, and we're very pleased about that.

In fact, in the past six years, Canada has concluded, signed, or brought into force more free trade agreements with Latin America and the Caribbean than with the rest of the world combined. We've focused our efforts right here at home in our own neighborhood, and we're very pleased with the response we've received.

I mentioned, Mr. Chairman, your country. Panama is a great example of a high-growth, emerging market. Canada's two-way merchandise trade with Panama in 2011 was more than a quarter of a billion dollars, which is pretty good for two fairly small economies. Even more awesome was that that figure was an increase of 105 percent over the past five years. That's tremendous growth, but what it really means is that there are more jobs for our people, there are more goods and services, and there's more need for all kinds of employment. That's good for our economies and for our communities.

I mentioned Panama as one example of a hemisphere that is undergoing incredible change. I was talking to somebody who bought property in Panama many years ago, and she said that when she goes back to Panama now, she doesn't even recognize it. It's completely different from what it was a couple of decades ago. This is because economic development really does provide infrastructure and growth to any economy.

From a broader regional perspective, we know that Latin America has become an economically dynamic region that is experiencing significant economic growth. Analysts say that there will be continued growth. When countries are growing—I know this happened in our country—you think it's always going to be that way. When the growth stops, when there's a recession, when there are difficulties, sometimes because of government decisions, you can't believe that things are changing. But it's good to know that there's great potential in our hemisphere for continued growth.

So, I guess you could say there are tectonic shifts. In February, I was in Chile —Secretary General, I know that's your country—at the Emergency Response Center, and I learned that Chile has 500 earthquakes every day. Most of them, of course, are too small to make a difference.

But there's an equally interesting tectonic shift going on across the global economy and particularly in this region. Harnessing those shifts and those opportunities for the benefit of our people, opening markets, and making a way for greater mutual prosperity is an activity in which we, as a multilateral, cooperative group, can play a stronger role.

Since we made the Americas our focus, Canada's trade with the region has increased by over 30 percent—32.1 percent, if you want the exact number. We have 2,500 Canadian companies now active in the Americas, which is another sign of great growth. Canadian companies are pretty timid, really; many of them are quite risk-averse, and so for 2,500 of them to now be active throughout the Americas is quite a bit of progress for our business community.

In addition, because resource development is a great opportunity in the Americas, you'll be interested to know that 60 percent of all mining investment in the region comes from Canada. People think of mining investment coming from the deep pockets of rich, gold-mining companies, but the way most, if not all, mining companies get their money is through investment by little people who buy shares in these companies on the stock exchange. It might just be a few shares. They might have some shares from their mutual funds or from their retirement savings accounts. Pension funds are often invested in these mining projects, and of course pensioners include blue-collar workers, auto workers, nurses, and teachers. These funds come from the pockets of ordinary, hard-working, very modest-income people from Canada. The fact that these funds, entrusted to companies by regular citizens, are being invested throughout our region is a testament to our commitment to our neighbors and to partnering with them in developing these important resources.

Of course, from a broader, regional perspective, new relationships have developed in recent years. I've been very pleased to have visited most of your countries and will continue to do so. It's been a real privilege to meet with many of your presidents, prime ministers, ministers, and leaders in business and civil society. We believe that as we continue to work together, we're going to be able to respond to the region's growing economic dynamism, to the benefit of all our people.

We talk about economic benefit. I want to point out that economic benefit really means greater equality. This is a region where not everybody enjoys the benefits of the opportunities, growth, and income increase that we've experienced through economic development and greater trade. Canada has its own struggles in this regard. We really need to focus on bringing everyone into a greater quality of life and standard of living through the economic opportunities that we're developing together. It's good that it benefits some people, but the more people it benefits, the stronger our societies are going to be. Left-behind people are wasted potential, wasted ability, and wasted talent, and Canada wants to work with all of our neighbors to bring more and more of our citizens into the mainstream of economic activity.

Canada is very pleased to have recently become an observer with the Pacific Alliance. We're quite excited about this new trading arrangement, which is really showing leadership in the region. The Alliance is promoting good governance and open markets, and the member nations are making great efforts to take down trade barriers between them and between those that may join the Alliance

in the future. Their goal is to reach out to Asia, and so here we have the Americas beginning to pool its influence, credibility, and potential to channel opportunities in the Pacific Rim.

I have to say though, colleagues, that the OAS has not been fully engaged in supporting these kinds of economic initiatives, and I know it's to some degree because you've been asked to do so much. You can't attend to a thousand priorities. At the same time, Canada really urges you, as our friends and neighbors, to focus more on this issue of trade and investment. Canada believes that, as the premier political forum in this hemisphere, the OAS has to take on a more substantial role in building an environment that will support investment and that will translate investment into growth.

As you know, OAS member states have been mandated by our leaders to collaborate to achieve economic growth. We believe that the OAS should lead these efforts by playing the important role that only a multilateral political body can play. We believe that the OAS needs to play that proactive role, together with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and OAS member states by working to create a stable environment for economic growth. The OAS has a great deal to offer in this regard and, I believe, will be able to add incredible value to those efforts.

Democracy and Security

The second objective I mentioned for Canada in the Americas was to strengthen security in democratic institutions. As a country of the New World and a member of *la gran familia de las Américas*—you can tell my Spanish is still a work in progress—Canada is steadfastly devoted to the democratic values that our countries have endorsed together. We see the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter as a shining statement—unique in the world, colleagues—of the shared commitment of the countries of the Hemisphere to the peoples of the Americas to pursue, support, and advance democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and accountability of public institutions. No stronger statement of commitment to the principles of democracy exists anywhere else in the world, and Canada shares your pride in this achievement. It is no small thing that this commitment was entered into.

The OAS's ability to support and advance democracy in the Hemisphere has really been one of your greatest strengths, Secretary General. The stability this has brought to the Hemisphere and the support that you have provided to struggling democracies, governments in transition, and the development of the institutions of government has set the terms by which countries of the Hemisphere have been building independent, innovative, and dynamic societies.

Canada is solidly committed to partnering with you in these efforts. Canada has supported fair and transparent elections in 17 countries of the region, we've contributed to 47 OAS electoral observation missions (EOMs) between 2009 and 2011 alone, and we will be supporting the OAS Electoral Observation Mission to Paraguay later this month.

But beyond sound institutions, we know that successful societies require peace and stability: safety on the ground; safety in the streets; safety in communities. Organized criminal networks are a threat to that safety. They include networks engaged in the illicit drug trade and related violent crimes, such as arms smuggling, people smuggling, trading in fraudulent documents, and criminal mining. A lot of these organizations take literally billions of dollars out of some of your countries in illegal gold, silver, and other resources. This is a terrible rip-off and abuse of the potential and the

resources of all of our countries and our peoples. Not only do they engage in this kind of robbery and theft, but they undermine security and good governance. They make it difficult to maintain an environment in which trade and investment can flourish and our children have options, other than joining gangs or getting involved in activities that undermine their future rather than build it.

Canada has increased its efforts to combat transnational organized crime and to strengthen governance in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to support our partners' efforts to strengthen freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. We have placed special emphasis on working in partnership with local governments, whether through the military, law enforcement, or civilian projects, to improve security in Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. This is a key transit region for drug trafficking northward and then over to Europe.

For example, Canada has actively supported Colombia's quest for peace and security. We have provided more than \$32 million since 2006 to support victims' rights, improve justice, and clear land mines. We've been a lead donor to the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS). That mission, colleagues, has played a pivotal role in disarming paramilitary groups, and it continues to provide critical assistance to the Government of Colombia as it reintegrates former combatants and tackles land restitution reforms.

So, security is improving, and this is creating an environment in which individuals and businesses are better able to prosper and grow.

What we've done, colleagues, isn't something new. We took this idea from a presentation by the IDB last year in Montevideo on MapAmericas, in which the Bank puts all of its projects on a virtual map. Canada is now doing the same thing. We're calling it Panorama-Americas because we didn't want to steal the IDB's idea. We've created a virtual map at <http://w03.international.gc.ca/Panorama-Americas> where you can click on your country or region and see Canada's projects. We've just completed Central America, and we're gradually going to be rolling out other regions of Latin America and the Caribbean over the next year or two. Nothing ever happens quickly, does it? But we're off to a good start, so that's great.

Colleagues, this virtual map will help us to better coordinate our efforts and make them less scattered. We'll know what our projects are and where they are so that we can build upon them. We also want to better inform Canadian citizens because they're paying to support their friends and neighbors throughout the Hemisphere. We believe they need to see what is happening there.

OAS Reform

This brings me to another theme that I want to emphasize this morning, and that is institutional strengthening. There's been a lot of talk. The Secretary General and I spoke again this morning about the OAS and the fact that this institution suffers from chronic long-term challenges and needs a path to long-term stability. The world critically needs multilateral institutions that have this kind of stability, and so we believe that we need to continue to take a hard look at the objectives of this organization and the structure we've relied on so far. By modernizing and reforming as events change and as shifts take place, we'll be able to make this organization more credible, more impactful, and more able to achieve better results throughout the Hemisphere.

You have no doubt seen for yourselves, because you've been working here with our good Ambassador Culham and his team, that your Canadian colleagues have been working together with you to promote budget reform and to modernize the Organization. We know that a lot of tasks have been heaped upon this organization and that some hard choices will have to be made as to the real role of the OAS. Unnecessary mandates will have to be weeded out. Some mandates are redundant; others are obsolete, so we have to look at what has been accumulating over the last few decades, examine those mandates closely, and eliminate those that we need to eliminate.

It's kind of like when you go into your office and your desk is piled high. Has that ever happened to you? It's happened to me. You have all these stacks of paper, not just on your desk but on the chairs, on the floor, and on the credenza, and you don't even know where to start. You play video games because it doesn't seem like even 15 minutes of decluttering is going to make any difference. That's why this weeding out, this setting down of a to-do list and a clear path forward is important at a personal level and at an organizational level.

Your Secretary General has initiated a strategic vision exercise, and we really support you, Secretary General, in that we think you've created an opportunity for a frank exchange on priorities and objectives by member states that will help to establish a more effective Secretariat. As part of this strategic vision, we see a role for many of this body's most successful activities, such as the electoral observation missions (EOMs), human rights, security, efforts to contain transnational organized crime, and excellence in public sector management. We also see a role for the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) as part of a vibrant defense and emergency response community in the Hemisphere.

By the way, colleagues, speaking of the Inter-American Defense Board, is Lieutenant-General Thibault here? Where are you, General? Oh, up on the raised podium! I want to take this opportunity to personally thank you for your leadership as Chair of the Board for the past two years. You have really been outstanding. We've been very proud of you. Thank you for what you've done!

Colleagues, you're all aware that the General will be second-in-command of Canada's military as soon as he completes his term in office with the Defense Board, and he's going to be a real asset to Canada. Thank you. Colleagues, would you join me in thanking the General?

[Aplausos.]

We're going to have a second-in-command of the Canadian forces who has great experience and insight with all of you and this hemisphere. That's going to be a real plus.

Canada believes that there's been considerable progress in the Inter-American Defense Board, and we look forward to seeing that progress continue under the new Chair.

It goes without saying that Canada will continue to participate with you as an equal partner in this important process of OAS reform. It's our hope that the process will lead to a renewal of the Organization that will deliver on the democratic, security, and prosperity needs of the Hemisphere.

Fostering Lasting Relationships

I want to spend a couple of minutes on fostering lasting relations. That's the most fun thing! Don't you know you meet wonderful people in this job? There are some who you don't think are wonderful every single day, but we're really blessed to have the kind of talent and commitment that surrounds us here in this forum.

Canada makes fostering genuine, strong, lasting relationships the core of our engagement in the Americas. In fact, these relationships and our partnerships with our neighbors in the Hemisphere who support our goals and achievements in the region are the backbone of every one of our projects. I think part of that is because people don't always agree. I've been shocked to know that Canada sometimes disagrees with other countries, but when you have a relationship, you can agree to disagree without being disagreeable. Because there's enough goodwill there, you can come to some kind of consensus or resolution because you want to. You want to have and enjoy good relationships.

And so I believe that nurturing and sustaining relationships across borders is the mortar, the cement that allows mutual understanding and cooperation to be built in our hemisphere. We build these friendships through honest, open communication and respect for each other, and we attempt to understand each other better, breaking down barriers of mistrust. Sometimes, we just don't understand where the other party is coming from, and by talking, we can iron that out. That is so important to build a better Americas for all our people.

Canada's ties with the Americas grow every day. I'm not exaggerating about. More than four million of us travel each year to the region for tourism, business, study, or sometimes to live part of the year. When you think about it, four million people are a lot, because Canada's population is only about 33 million, so that's a significant amount of travel.

We also have a vibrant Latin American and Caribbean diaspora in Canada. Just about a million of Canada's citizens are from the rest of the Hemisphere—that number is growing rapidly—and they maintain links to their homeland. They're an important bridge between the nations of the Hemisphere.

We're also strengthening people-to-people links between Canada and the Americas through education, art, culture, and sport. In that regard, you probably remember that the Canadian Permanent Mission to the OAS arranged a presentation to you last month by organizers of the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games, which will take place in Toronto, Canada, in 2015. This event will bring 250,000 participants and visitors to Canada, so it's another opportunity to build and strengthen ties between our country and the countries that you all represent across all sectors of society. Of course, these games also give each of you a unique opportunity to raise the profile of your countries among Canadians. Canadians took about 59 million trips outside the country in 2011, so we think this is going to be an important window for all of you to appeal to our adventurous spirit and our love of warmer winter climates.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate how proud Canada is to be a member of the OAS and *la gran familia de las Américas*, but as all of us who are part of families understand, those relationships aren't always easy. Families grow and thrive when they face issues that divide them with tolerance and restraint, and as they spend as much time as possible expanding those areas in which they see

positive and productive outcomes, focusing on themes that bring the family together and not divide it, and to which they return for refueling and rejuvenation.

The OAS is a dynamic gathering place of a very large and diverse family. Every opportunity for discord is matched by a dozen chances for harmony. Regional groupings and member states need to work constructively together. There is more that unites us than drives us apart, but sometimes we seem to return to the same arguments. This is neither productive nor healthy.

Canada looks forward to every one of our gatherings—the Summits, the General Assemblies—with optimism and enthusiasm, knowing that together, we have a lot to gain, but if we are divided, we have a lot to lose.

In two months, we will come together in Antigua, Guatemala, to focus on the impact of the illicit drug trade and its associated violence, corruption, and impunity on the Americas. It is one of the most serious threats faced by the region. It is Canada's hope that we will use this meeting, colleagues, to identify opportunities for collaboration, advance where there is agreement, and set a positive agenda for progress on reducing the impact of the drug trade on the lives of citizens of the Hemisphere.

Of course, there are areas where we will disagree. As the largest democratic region in the world, every one of us recognizes and respects the rich diversity of opinion that we will encounter, and we believe that this is one of our strengths—although it may not always feel so. Canada will work with Guatemala, as we will with every member state, to ensure that this upcoming session of the General Assembly is a success. We are confident that Guatemala will put on an event worthy of the best, most positive, and most constructive engagement from every delegation that participates.

We will work with you all to move forward as a region to the next Summit of the Americas, to be hosted in Panama. This process has resulted in some of the most important initiatives this hemisphere has pursued collectively, as I have already outlined. So, with a collective commitment to succeed, we look forward to great things to come. We understand the challenges we face, but we embrace them openly, respectfully, and with determination.

Canada is, colleagues, and will remain your willing partner in the ongoing evolution of the Americas. We look forward to working with you to build a brighter future for our hemisphere.

Thank you very much for your time.

[Aplausos.]

El PRESIDENTE: Honorable señora, en nombre de todos los miembros de este Consejo Permanente de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, al igual que de los Observadores Permanentes, queremos darle las gracias por las reflexiones que usted ha compartido con nosotros esta mañana sobre la relación del Canadá con nuestra Organización. Quiero comunicarle que particularmente valoro las referencias positivas que usted ha vertido en cuanto al desarrollo económico que está alcanzando mi país. Su ilustrada presentación y los conceptos vertidos quedarán registrados en el acta de esta sesión y en nuestras conciencias. Muchas gracias.

Ahora solicitamos a los distinguidos Representantes que permanezcan en sus asientos mientras la excelentísima señora Ministra Diane Ablonczy y su comitiva se retiran de esta sala.

Señores Representantes y honorables invitados, se levanta esta sesión del Consejo Permanente, con el ruego de que los señores Representantes me acompañen para dar inicio inmediatamente a la siguiente sesión. Muchas gracias.

Se levanta la sesión.

[La Ministra y su comitiva se retiran de la sala.]

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