

**REMARKS BY OAS SECRETARY_GENERAL JOSE MIGUEL INSULZA
For Webcast to First Global Summit on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change**

Alaska April 23 2009

Good Day to you all!

Let me from the outset convey my deepest apologies for being unable to join you for this historic first Global Conference on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change. I deeply sorry that my commitments to the closing events for the 5th Summit of the Americas, in Trinidad and Tobago made it impossible for me to keep an early promise I gave to the hardworking Chairperson of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Mrs. Patricia Cochran to attend the event and to be its Patron.

But I am grateful for this opportunity which technology affords me to speak with you via webcast.

I wish to congratulate the ICC and other collaborating institutions for organizing this important conference, which I regard as a watershed event. The conference is a crucial one because it is a gathering of indigenous people who are among the first to be affected by the impacts of climate change, which represents perhaps the gravest threat to the security of our hemisphere.

Virtually every day, new evidence is received which shows that Global Climate Change is real and that it seriously threatens the lives and livelihoods of billions of people around the world. Only a week ago, we received news of the rupture of the once stable Wilkins Ice Shelf in the Western Antarctic. Scientists report that the temperature in this area has increased by 0.6 degree centigrade over the past 50 years and that the rapid melting of the polar ice caps has caused sea levels to rise by between 10 - 25 centimeters

Those of you from the Caribbean who are here know tropical storms and hurricanes are becoming stronger and more frequent. Delegates from the African continent would have brought with you stories of the rapid transformation of regions that were once blessed with regular rainfall into deserts. Indigenous people living in the Andean mountain regions of Colombia know that malaria is now a threat at heights above 2000 meters.

All around the world, people, especially indigenous people are in locked in the fight of their lives to preserve their way of life. An important part of this fight is to force those who are responsible for climate change to take responsibility for their actions and inactions. But the fight also includes sharing lessons and experiences on ways to adapt to a changing climate.

In coming together in Alaska you have sent out a powerful message to the rest of the world that you will not adopt a posture of hopelessness in the face of this imposing threat.

My message to you today, is that we in the OAS do not see this as your fight alone, as all of us are going to be affected by climate change in some way, shape or form.

There is a glimmer of hope in the new positive and supportive stance being taken by the administration of President Barack Obama. But there is still a long road ahead and still much work to do to convince all countries to build low carbon economies.

For its part, the OAS will continue to do all that is possible to assist the people of the hemisphere to adapt to climate change. As some of you may know the OAS has also been very active in the Tres Fronteras region; and in the San Juan Basin, and La Plata Basins.

We know that there is a lot more to be done and I pledge that we will do as much as we can to work with Governments in our hemisphere to bring about significant reductions in Greenhouse gas emissions

I want to commend the Chairperson and members of the ICC and the Conference Planning Committee for all the hard work that went into the organization of this important event.

Also I thank you all for attending and wish you a productive and enjoyable Conference.

I Thank You.