



Organización de los Estados Americanos
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MESOAMERICA 2020: CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (USFWS) AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS)

**MESOAMERICA 2020 ANNIVERSARY EVENT
CONCLUDING REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR DR. NEIL PARSAN
SEPTEMBER 21, 2015**

- Thanks to all the speakers for their thoughtful remarks and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Permanent Mission to the OAS and for their continued support.
- Mesoamerica is one of two areas in the Americas where ancient civilization arose independently – the other being Norte Chico in present-day northern coastal Peru.
- Beginning as early as 7000 BC, Mesoamerica is defined by a mosaic of cultural traits developed and shared by its indigenous cultures. Fascinating mythological and religious traditions, a numeric system, and a calendar, ball playing, and unique architectural styles worthy of any were diffused through the area. Aspects of the Mesoamerican cultural heritage still survive among the indigenous peoples who inhabit Mesoamerica, many of whom continue to speak their ancestral languages, and maintain many practices harking back to their Mesoamerican roots. Cultural identity matched with the mega biodiversity make this initiative timely and important.
- This has been a year of significant accomplishments for the OAS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Mesoamerica 2020. Through this partnership, Conservation Professionals have been able to share and disseminate best practices, tools, and techniques, laying out a clear-cut road map to formulate strategies and create action plans for peer-to-peer networks, interactive communities, and on-the-ground activities.
- Furthermore, on the ground specific conservation activities at the landscape level have been formulated through inclusive and participatory processes in all Mesoamerican countries and will start implementation in 2016 strengthening transnational efforts and promoting peace, development and security in our region.
- Building on this foundation, it is our hope that Mesoamerica 2020 and the project grants announced today in buffer zones, corridors and multiple-use areas



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reduce threats to species and ecosystems across high value landscapes in Central America and strengthen the requisite individual and institutional capacity to sustain conservation efforts in the long-term.

- This celebration comes at the right time as we prepare to hold the Third Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development on October 19th and 20th, 2015, in Tela, Honduras where OAS Member States will identify priority hemispheric policies and strategies for supporting the region's progress towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through the implementation of the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development (PIDS).
- Since 2006, the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development has served as the overarching framework for the work of the General Secretariat of the OAS in several areas including sustainable management of forests and other natural resources, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, coastal zone management and adaptation to climate change.
- OAS Member States will once again set forth a path toward a sustainable future in the Hemisphere through the formulation and review of the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development. With political leadership, that future will be built on the foundation of several efforts that galvanize the energy and initiative of communities and stakeholders in the Americas. Today we are celebrating the Anniversary of one such effort, and with the leadership of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Organization of American States and the backing of its member states, we will continue to contribute to key conservation efforts, one step at a time. Thanks to all of you for attending this Ceremony.