



Organización de los  
Estados Americanos



Statement by Minister Alfredo Moreno Charme at the closing of the “Hemispheric Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and Renewal of the Americas’ Commitment to Democracy”.

Valparaiso, September 4, 2011

The OAS Member States have gathered this weekend in Valparaiso to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (IDC) and renew the Americas’ commitment to democracy. The adoption of the IDC in September 2001 in Lima, Peru, was the end of a road that originated with the Santiago Commitment to Democracy and Resolution 1080, dated 1991, which was enhanced by the Washington Protocol (1997) and later by the Declaration of Heads of State and Government at the Third Summit of the Americas held in Quebec, Canada, in 2001.

Just as the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter was the reflection and result of a period in our shared history, Chile offered to host this meeting with the conviction that today it is necessary and possible to search together for tools to support in our own countries the consolidation and progressive and virtuous transition from a purely electoral democracy to democracies with a greater participatory quality and institutional stability, among other attributes.

As President Sebastian Piñera recalled in the opening of this continental meeting, the IDC states that “*The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it. Democracy is essential for the social, political, and economic development of the peoples of the Americas.*”

It is in this spirit that on this occasion the Member States have gathered to reflect on the strengthening and protection of democracy in the continent and the challenges of social inclusion in our democracies. Once again, it was underscored that the IDC is the premier regional instrument for democratic governance and a core element of our identity as a region.

As for the imperative of social inclusion, Member States jointly reaffirm that Article 11 of the IDC remains fully applicable today as it states that “*democracy and economic and social development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing*”.

The presentations covered different areas and the interventions of several States evidenced the firm conviction that Democracy goes hand in hand with the fight against poverty. In this context, the only way to fight discrimination is through greater citizen participation.

Many voices called for stronger participation by various groups that are not always properly heard, such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and various social and civil society actors.



The Democratic Charter has witnessed much progress in the continent's democracies over the past ten years, but the challenges of social inclusion have not been overcome. We must continue to strive to overcome illiteracy, low levels of human development, limited citizen participation, and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, we must reflect on the role of OAS, and define some general courses of action so that the Organization may guide us to achieve further progress in the field of social inclusion.

Several delegations stressed the importance of concluding the negotiation processes of the Social Charter, the Convention against Racism and all forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Violence, organized crime, drug trafficking and other threats to security affect democracy and erode social cohesion. These should be jointly addressed by the Member States pursuant to the commitment we made some months ago at the XLI OAS General Assembly held in San Salvador.

It was generally agreed that there can be no democracy without respect for human rights and fundamental liberties. Therefore, as States we must continue in our efforts to strengthen the Inter-American Human Rights System.

With regard to the collective protection of democracy, our deliberations account for the enormous value of the IDC - and the satisfaction with the instances of its successful application during its first decade- as well as for the broad consensus on the need to have the best possible tools to prevent democratic crises or democratic breakdowns.

Various views were raised along this line. Some States highlighted that the IDC offers sufficient and wide-ranging tools for preventive action, making any future revisions unnecessary. Its preventive capacity could be strengthened by a broader interpretation of its current provisions. The States' responsibility and will to apply the Charter were highlighted as a decisive factor in effectively preventing democratic crises in the region.

Other States proposed to continue to develop the IDC through new instruments that complement and enhance the preventive action capacity of the OAS, ranging from strengthening the authority of the Secretary General to act preventively to broadening the instances in which the mechanisms for democratic protection may be activated, or allowing for more actors to activate preventive protection. Alternatively, mechanisms to assess the status of democracy in the region were suggested, based on peer review models, designing objective and previously agreed indicators to assess basic institutional conditions, or the establishment of a best practices compendium, always aiming for prevention through the timely application of these instruments. Along these same lines, some proposals were made that may eventually be considered and which seek to incorporate new figures into this task, following models such as Special Rapporteurs, Ombudsman or a Commissioner for Democracy in the Inter-American System.



Organización de los  
Estados Americanos



In brief, it was evident that there are different ways to reach our common goal of strengthening the prevention action capacity of the OAS to protect and promote our democracies. As pointed out by President Piñera, in this matter it will always be preferable to prevent rather than to cure, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention. For this purpose, the OAS' institutional framework must be strengthened by providing it with the necessary resources.

All the countries hereby reaffirm our commitment to democracy and the will that it be extended to all sectors of our society. Democracy, for all the limitations it may have, is the best and fairest system of government. Thus, the States of the Americas renew their steadfast commitment to democracy and its strengthening.